# THE METAPHYSICAL PATH

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by

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# EXPLANATORY NOTE

This is by no means a preface in which, prone to verbosity, I present Eastern Tradition to Western criticism; for, when it comes to matters of the spirit, it would be more polite, logical and natural to present the West to the East, should the latter consent to it.

Nor did I wish to set two doctrines against one another, or, to put it more accurately, two human interpretations of a single doctrine. – I simply thought that, at a time when we are striving to trace human knowledge back to its sources, in order to find there a truth that is more or less untainted, I thought it would be good to present the primordial and traditional source of all knowledge, the original stream on which all humanity depends; I have drawn it from the limbo from which it is rather difficult to extricate: firstly because the obligatory sojourn in the Far East is still undertaken today more often to behead people there than to decipher and understand texts; secondly, because the ideography in which Tradition is enshrined is abstruse, or nearly so, to the white race; finally, because, if my count is correct, there are precisely five Europeans—one of whom has just died—who, along with the material means to read, have received the intellectual means to grasp the substance of their reading.

I have been led to divide this work into three parts: the first – which I present here – sets out, under the title *'Metaphysical* Way', the principles of the Tradition and its philosophical and cosmogonic development; the second, under the title *'Rational* Way', will describe the systematisation of the Tradition, with Laozi's Taoism, or 'Way and Virtue of Reason'; – the third, under the title *'Social* Way', will describe the adaptation of the Tradition, with the political and communist philosophy of Kongzi (known as Confucius by Christian missionaries).

This highly delicate task, which I can say I have carried out, if not successfully, at least scrupulously, will doubtless not bear fruit that is particularly palatable to the European taste. And yet I must confess that, with the aim—more practical than laudable—of making the sacred texts of Yellow Antiquity immediately comprehensible, I have often employed Western phrasing, and favoured, rather than the reasoning appropriate to these texts, the reasoning appropriate to the minds of the readers, whenever both led to an identical conclusion.

I have taken the liberty of doing so, because the teachings of the '*Metaphysical* Way' would have been incomprehensible without commentary; I have therefore adapted the commentaries I have provided to the Western mindset, rather than forcing a translation—always a laborious task—into Western language of the theories expressed in Yellow language, which I would personally have found easier to expound.

I shall not proceed in this manner in *the 'Rational* Way', nor in *the 'Social* Way'; for there is no reasoning to add to the teachings of Laozi and Kongzi, but only some clarification. Apart from my natural inclination, I am drawn to this strictness of transposition by the utterly comical results produced by certain recent pseudo-translators, who believed they could embellish and perfect the *'Book of the* Way', and who, to do so, did not even have the excuse of being members of the Institute.

And if, after the arduous reading, or the outright rejection, of these difficult yet marvellous doctrines, I am denied the merit of being elegant, interesting and pleasant, at least I shall be entitled to bear witness to myself that I have never ceased to be an interpreter respectful of tradition, and a faithful and devout son of the masters who taught it to me.

This testimony clears my conscience. It is this alone that I have always been concerned with, and remain concerned with. For the success of this small undertaking—which is the local exposition of a doctrine—matters not to a word that knows itself to be eternal.

MATGIOI.

*Editor's note*: The third volume announced by the author, *The Social Way*, was never published and we do not even know whether it was ever written.

# CHAPTER ONE

# THE PRIMORDIAL TRADITION

The present-day religions of the yellow peoples consist of a multitude of diverse elements. They should be seen merely as a popular jumble, stemming from three source traditions: primitive religion, Taoism and Confucianism. These three influences, amalgamated more or less successfully over the centuries, constitute the traditional religion of the empire: these three influences correspond to three liturgies, which form the body of official and popular ceremonies.

Travellers, missionaries, and all foreigners to the yellow races who have judged traditional Chinese society by its outward appearance have taken the appearance for the reality; even even had they tried—which they had neither the time nor the inclination to do—to penetrate further, they would have been stopped by the custodians of the Primordial Tradition, which is not made public among the Chinese people, and which is *all the more* hidden from distant barbarians.

It is easy to misunderstand those who wish to remain unknown. This is what the white Western scholars did with regard to the yellow Eastern scholars, and with all the more impunity since there was no one there to challenge them; believing that they could do without them, they ignored them: and thus the most venerable Western tradition, to trace its origins back to the beginning of time, climbed Jacob's Ladder and, for want of anything better, clung to that Judaism, which is but a bloody parody of the ancient Hindu cults, and to that Mosaic religion, which is but an Egyptian adaptation washed out in the Red Sea.

We now know of better and nobler origins; and even if Europe's colonial conquests had achieved nothing else, they would nonetheless be worthy of the gratitude of the human spirit, to whom they revealed, unconsciously of course, the traditions carefully hidden behind the Great Walls, sheltered from the most closed and, to our minds, most contradictory of civilisations.

I must attempt here to open up to the twentieth-century West this treasure, hidden for five thousand years and unknown even to some of its guardians. But I wish first to establish the principal characteristics of this tradition, by virtue of which it appears as the First Tradition, and consequently the true one, and above all to determine, through the human and tangible evidence left to us by its authors, how the monuments of this tradition date back to an era when, in the forests that then covered Europe and even western Asia, bears and wolves were scarcely distinguishable from men, being like them covered in fur and eaters of raw flesh.

When Fohi, that enigmatic emperor, wrote, three thousand seven hundred years before Christ, that is to say two thousand three hundred years before Moses, the metaphysical and cosmogonic mysteries that formed the framework of the Yijing, he declared that he drew his teachings from the past with the utmost respect, describing it as highly learned, very prudent, and very difficult to determine.

And, he said, he understood that one day, for future generations, his own era would be a past equally abstruse and difficult to define.

He therefore dates his work not by reference to a conventional era or the name of a sovereign whose fame—and indeed whose very memory—will fade with time, but rather by reference to a *solar and stellar state*, which he describes in great detail, and to which astronomers of the future will be able to assign a chronology with absolute certainty. Thus, whilst the Hebrew patriarchs, among the thickest books and most intractable works, cause the Benedictines no end of trouble, all that is needed to ascertain the exact date of Fohi and his Yiking is to place a telescope in the hands of one of the countless disciples of Mr Camille Flammarion. No doubt Fohi feared neither scrutiny nor refutation by posterity. And we emphasise this marvellous precaution, not only to show the perfection to which the science of astronomy had attained in those times, but to make clear, in a single stroke, the practical, ingenious, logical and unclouded mind already possessed by the Chinese sages of five thousand years ago, a spirit which distinguishes them from all the reformers of peoples, who, though they came later upon the earth, lived only by legends and wrote only parables.

For the half a billion people who inhabit the Far East, whatever the outward form of their beliefs, there has never been, as regards the origin of things, the divine essence, and the relationship between heaven, earth and mankind, there has never been, at any time whatsoever, whether historical or legendary (and the history of China has been authentic for five thousand years), any divine revelation or intervention from on high. In the books, in the commentaries, in the traditions, there is nothing ‘supernatural’; the idea is not even suggested; the word is not uttered. No patriarch saw the Lord, as Moses did; no man conversed with angels, as Muhammad did; no saint attained eternal perfection whilst still alive, as the Buddha did; no God descended to earth, as the Messiah did.

To grasp the rigorous logic, to understand the undeniable clarity of the Chinese tradition, one must emphasise, with great emphasis, this fundamental distinction: that it claims to be human, and that it calls for nothing but human insight, to the exclusion of any divine mystery and even of any metaphysical postulate.

Despite a very widespread linguistic error, a revelation is precisely the opposite of an elucidation: to reveal is the opposite of to unveil, just as to cover is the opposite of to uncover; a revelation is a cloud cast over the truth, a cloud whose forms suit the moral aesthetics of the moment; it is, to put it bluntly, a lie suited to the sentiments and needs of the hour in which it is formulated, and destined to be, in the future, contested, denied, and replaced, as the sentiments that gave rise to it undergo change.

Is this, then, the work of God? And, on the contrary, is it not worth noting that the supposition of ‘revelations’ made by a god who speaks or

walks and lives, is a consequence of unconscious anthropomorphism, which was and still remains the sovereign master of the theogonic conceptions of a large part of the human race?

But the masters of Far Eastern thought had no need of heavenly assistance to dispel errors or to create symbols.

Their peoples, content with the truth they had never lost, did not demand trappings to cover it; they did not ask for the manifestation of God, for they were still too close to him to have forgotten or already failed to recognise him. In the unbroken Tradition and in the words of those who transmitted it, they clearly saw heaven itself and its work; and, content to be able to understand the Father from whom they descended, they felt no urgency for a divinity to appear before their eyes, in a more or less tangible form, to impose upon them a doctrine devised by men and yet filled with mysteries that baffled human reason and defied human logic.

It is precisely because this primordial tradition managed to endure amongst the Yellow Race that we owe to them the earliest monuments of writing and science, without having needed, to triumph, the violence of a god or a heavenly intervention; it is for this very reason that we must recognise it as being, *in and of itself*, appropriate to the human race, and consequently intact and genuine.

This tradition, which is neither unveiled nor revealed by a god, nor dogmatised or decreed by the representatives—official or unofficial—of a divinity, possesses none of the characteristics proper to things that are '*a* priori' above human nature, and is therefore beyond the scope of human discussion.

Let us immediately consider the practical consequences, in the daily lives of the Chinese, of this undisputed origin of the Primordial Tradition; and let us acknowledge that, quite apart from the satisfaction of logic and the rational study made possible, the Chinese enjoyed an unusual happiness owing to the modesty of their first sages, who were also their first emperors, and who did not deem it urgent, in order to be illustrious and obeyed, to have their decrees emerge from the cave of a sibyl, or to have them fall from a cloud-covered mountain. A happy people indeed, those who were not compelled to a perpetual struggle between their reason and their hearts, who always had the aid and the voice of Heaven within their reach, who found in their sacred tradition the means to their immediate prosperity as well as to their future bliss, to whom no mysterious power instilled the fear of a formidable and vengeful sovereign from on high, and for whom the thought of death, natural and inevitable, did not poison their earthly life with the torments of the unknown.

Indeed, this Tradition, to which every Yellow person, even without fully understanding or delving into it, is as attached as to their family, their land and their own blood, because it is, in short, the entire intellectual and moral heritage of the Ancestors; this Tradition does not claim to stem from a divine source (at least one that is direct and specific to the race); it disregards imposed theocratic doctrine; it does not constitute religious dogmas. The immediate corollary is that all the *religions* and liturgies that flourish to a greater or lesser extent in the Far East have no traditional origin; they do not share in the absolute and inviolable nature of a transmitted heritage; they

are merely '*faculties*': they cannot claim either the obedience due to things bequeathed as certain, nor the respect due to things bequeathed as ancient. Tradition itself imposes itself only through its clarity and the all-powerful virtue of its past. How could religions—more or less pure translations of this tradition, seeking to adapt it more easily to the masses—dare to assume this character of binding certainty, which is nowhere imposed by Tradition itself?

'*Love Religion: be wary of religions*.' This maxim, inscribed on the pediments of temples and in the minds of men, is the only advice given to the yellow race; and this advice is not a command. But it defines, with a conciseness matched only by its clarity, how Religion is precisely the Primordial Tradition, exclusively human, and how Religions, with their heavenly interventions, are easier but less precise means of rising to Religion.

And one immediately sees, from this system so logical, so simple, so natural, or, to put it better, so anti-supernatural, the profound consequences that flow for the entire intellectual, moral, and even material life of peoples wise enough to adhere to it.

*Religion imposes no obligation*; for once the purely human reason of the earliest Sages, applied to understanding the Essence and the Way of all beings, has deduced the symbols and rites, it is impossible to compel men to believe in them and practise them: that which has emerged from a human mind is not, *a priori*, binding upon other human minds. The most revered masters have sought to illuminate traditional dogmas with the brightest and most definitive light; yet he who does not understand is bound by nothing; nor is he who has no time to seek understanding bound by anything. And, just as much as the most learned and studious scholars, that person is nonetheless swept along by the general course of evolution, from which they cannot, fortunately, escape since they exist.

*Religion has no sanctions*; for it is only in the name of a God, invoked more or less logically, that men can threaten their fellow men with punishment or reprisals if they are not believed in everything they say, however incomprehensible it may be; and for these threats to have any real effect, these men must declare themselves to be, and be believed to be, the mouthpieces of an absent and severe God. No one here is therefore *bound*: each person is merely *committed* to seeking enlightenment according to their abilities and means, and, whatever the outcome of the intellectual endeavour thus undertaken, no punishment, either in this life or in the next, hangs over those who do not follow the traditional teachings in their hearts.

*Religion is not exclusive*. It is perfectly permissible, provided that the laws are not broken, to practise openly Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, or any other external faith; it is permitted to change one's faith; it is permitted to belong to none: there is no anathema against anyone.

Since Heaven constitutes, at the end of evolution, the universality of all beings, to disapprove of or condemn a necessary part of this universality is to delay that evolution (assuming such a thing were possible).

*There is therefore no state religion*, nor state-sanctioned worship, nor state-employed priests: the state neither protects nor prohibits any form of worship; proselytism does not exist. The study of religions continues at the discretion of voluntary students, under the guidance of unpaid teachers; all cults coexist side by side, under the indifferent eye of the State, on the sole condition that they remain a matter of conscience, that they do not vie for followers, and that, through the ambition or turbulence of their representatives, they do not foment unrest or rebellion against the law within the Empire. There is no persecution: the measures taken, throughout history, against such new religions, have been responses and not attacks.

*There is no state-funded religion*: each sect or belief maintains its own temples and priests, according to the number and generosity of its followers: no one concerns themselves with what goes on inside these buildings – in which, generally speaking, nothing at all happens – as religions are primarily metaphysical, and liturgies do not belong specifically to any of them. And if the State decrees the place and time of Confucian honours in the commemorative pagodas, it is because the ceremonies instituted in honour of Confucius have never been, in any way, a religion, but a *civil rite*.

Religion, at least as regards those *traditions* we call religions, and especially as regards external worship, is not even a family matter; birth, marriage and death are not religious matters, because they are precisely natural matters; and it is the head of the family who is the sole priest in this regard. Between the bonze's pagoda and the family hearth stand, in all its legal stature, the sovereign authority of the father, and with its ancient power, the family cult of the Ancestors, an image—reduced to each lineage—of the primordial and universal Tradition of Humanity. Religion is therefore a matter of personal conscience and individual freedom; the principles of traditional metaphysics and philosophy are transmitted within families by the learned men who are part of them. Beyond the wall enclosing the paternal domain, nothing of this seeps out; and no one would have the audacity—which would, moreover, be pointless—to cross the moral barrier that thus protects the independence and dignity of citizens.

Liturgical rites require no outward signs. Rites, determined by a series of laws and regulations, form part of the empire's political principles: and religious practice being thus reduced to nothing, theories are the subject, amongst followers of different faiths, only of courteous and smiling discussions, in which no angry glances or the fire of any pyre are to be seen.

As for the moral conduct of peoples, which seems to be the earthly and immediate aim of religions, the naturalist philosopher Confucius takes charge of this, without any divine intervention; and we know in what masterful fashion this gentle scholar educated his disciples, and how he won over the soul of his race more effectively than

the prophets of Judea and Islam, who came amidst carnage and curses.

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Thus, the first of men, Fohi, *crystallised* the Primordial Tradition [1] ; Laozi derived a body of doctrine from it, Confucius derived a moral system. Can one say that any of these intellectual legacies, or their amalgamation, formed a *Religion*, in the sense that the West gives to the word? It is impossible; nothing could be more utterly contrary to the truth. And yet there is nothing else, among the yellow races, to connect man to God; and there is no country in the world where belief in the Supreme Being is more universal and appears more reasonable than in the lands of the yellow race. – Where does this apparent contradiction come from? It comes from the very essence of Tradition. There is no need for religion to connect man to Heaven[2], tradition suffices: it is the metaphysical cord by which Humanity remains forever bound to the Essence; nothing has severed it; nothing has loosened it; and so it shall remain throughout time. Humanity will never cease to be born: and, *if it ceases to be born, it will have become, precisely then, the One who begot it*. This is the cornerstone of Tradition. Protected by the finest laws and the most tranquil history, the yellow races have never lost sight of this cornerstone; a heavenly intervention would teach them nothing more: and that is why such an intervention has not occurred, and why no sage and no emperor has deemed it useful to feign one. That is why belief in Heaven is universal, natural and logical. For a Chinese person, to believe in God is to believe in oneself. Under such circumstances, there are no atheists.

In everyday practice, the consequence is that, whilst the Supreme Being takes an interest in the evolution of creation—and in particular of humanity—He is quite indifferent to whether humanity concerns itself with Him. Therefore, there is no need for sacrifices, no need for fear, no need for alms or gifts made in the name of that fear: the Lord of Heaven crowns this creation that has emerged from him, whilst waiting for it to perfect itself to the point of returning to him. He who is the source from which the river springs, and the sea into which it flows and is lost, cannot be the enemy of the waves that compose it, at any point in its course. And so, without denying the imperfections that are the inevitable accompaniment of divisibility, the Yellow Man has, of himself, of his spirit, and of his conceptions, an idea of dignity, which is earned by his celestial continuity, and which bears no resemblance to the degradation into which revealed religions plunge the human creature.

Is the absence of a religious ideal in the motives behind their actions the cause, for the Yellow races, of the age-old stagnation in which their civilisation has become numb? No one could say. But this absence of religiosity, by removing a powerful

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[1] It is important to state at the outset that Fohi is neither a man nor a myth, but the designation of an intellectual aggregate, as Hermes was elsewhere.

[2] The word Heaven is the translation of the metaphysical character Thien, by which the ideographic script represents the total idea that the West calls God.

source of discord, spared their history many upheavals. And this lack of sentimentality, by endowing them with a practical indifference to the afterlife, and by turning their gaze and desires back towards the paternal and nurturing earth, made them happier more easily and immediately.

In any case, one must always bear in mind, when studying and penetrating the Primordial Tradition, these two principles which form the basis of all Far Eastern science: the humiliation of man is not a necessary element of the greatness of heaven; the suffering of man is not a necessary element of his evolution.

# CHAPTER II

# THE FIRST MONUMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

It is not merely by chronological reasoning that we are led to seek in the yellow race the *oldest* monument of knowledge; it is by psychological and logical reasoning that we are led to recognise in them the *most accurate* monument of this knowledge.

Since the Chinese are essentially traditional, the essence of their philosophy must lie in the most ancient texts: these, written in bygone eras when human needs were fewer and the intensity of human desires did not lead people to obscure the truth—whether knowingly or unknowingly—must be the source of all subsequent teachings. The filial piety of the Chinese therefore held that everything of interest to man was *virtually* contained in the earliest books, and that all the answers to every problem were potentially included therein: the solutions and clarifications required by the new sciences were to be found in the ancient laws, in embryonic form, and were to be developed in a manner analogous to the solutions they provided for the sciences of the eras in which they were composed. The conviction of this synthesis, so powerful that it encompassed in its very inception every conceivable endeavour of the human mind, forms the foundation and certainty of all Asian philosophy, and has developed the analogical and deductive mind of the Yellow Race.

This mindset, which reveres the institutions and doctrines of the past – to the point of subordinating the actions of the present and the speculations of the future to them – is also a way of honouring, right down to its most primitive form, the common Ancestor from whom the race emerged. It was bound to have a twofold result: firstly, to preserve, through the vicissitudes of the ages, the books of the most ancient times, in their entirety and with perfect fidelity; secondly, to prevent divisions of opinion and the antagonism of systems, and to create, within a single stream of teaching, a unified school, deriving from a single source, applying all the ingenious tenacity of the race to the same goal by the same means. This dual result was achieved; we shall see what consequences it was to have for the intellectual, political and historical life of the race.

The first book of China – which is also, by far, the first book in the world – dates back to Emperor Fohi, the first of the sovereigns of the historical cycle of the Yellow Race. However much it may be shrouded in legends, embellished by a naive and popular reverence, its existence is neither disputable nor disputed. He reigned over what

was then called China, from the year 3468 BC. This chronology is based, as we have said, not on modern calculations of a more or less fanciful nature, but on a precise description of the state of the heavens at the time when Fohi reigned[1] .

Let us state at the outset that the doctrines which have come down to posterity under his name should not be attributed personally to Fohi. Fohi, like all the rulers of those distant times, was a scholar, a magician, a leader of a school; it was precisely for this reason that he was chosen as ruler by his people (China, in fact, has had hereditary dynasties only since the year 2199 BC). Fohi had friends, disciples and ministers. All of them produced commentaries and interpretations of Fohi's doctrines, which the imperial hexagrams, moreover, required; and all this body of work, amalgamated and conflated, became the 'Doctrine of Fohi': '*Fohi*' is the name of a metaphysical school, and of several centuries of human thought.

Fohi's work consists of three treatises, two of which are lost; contemporary writings mention only their titles; these are: the *Lienshan* (mountain ranges), that is to say, the Book of Unalterable Principles, against which nothing can prevail: – the *Koueïtsang* (return), that is to say, the Book to which all questions must be brought back in order to find their solution.

The third treatise, which is the '*first monument of human* knowledge', is entitled the *I Ching* (Changes in the Circular Revolution). This title reminds us that all the apparent modes of the Creator in creation are studied through sixty-four symbols (the hexagrams) *forming a circle*, the last of which is intimately linked to the first (this is the first opportunity to note that the Yellow Emperor often employs imagery rather than words, to allow a particular idea its full synthetic scope).

There is no doubt – let us make this clear at once – that there were written monuments predating the treatises of which the I Ching is the third. These monuments were written, or drawn, or carved, on the 'Roof of the World', the sole cradle of humanity, using signs that all of humanity understood, before it had been divided by various migrations, and had thus lost the awareness of its wholeness. What this unique script is, we shall doubtless never know except through approximate assessments; for a palaeographer will not reconstruct a script by means of a single stem, just as Cuvier reconstructed a mammoth by means of a single leg. But it is from this single script that, in corresponding eras and through processes of parallel deformation, the Chinese hierograms and the Chaldean (or Sumero-Akkadian) hieroglyphs derive. It is possible, however, to determine the influences—all physical—that governed these deformations.

On this Pamir, which was our common cradle, a single language and a single script, both now lost, prevailed. One day, whether a cataclysm brought to these heights the cold that reigns there today, or whether, by dint of leaning over the rugged edge of the plateaus, the human race was overcome by vertigo at the sight of the unknown plains,

[1] The Chinese share this with the Hindus, the Egyptians and all peoples who, as bearers of a Tradition, wish to preserve a reliable chronology of it.

A day came when men, via the rivers that sprang from the primeval plateaus, descended to the lower levels. Thus those of the South, the future Reds, via the Dzangbo and the Sindh; thus those of the West, the future Whites, via the Syr and the Amu; thus those of the East, the future Yellows, via the Hoangho and the Yangtze; all, without looking back, left the ancestral mountain that was the navel of the world. Among them, the elders and the scholars carried with them Wisdom and Tradition.

Now, on the fertile banks of the rivers, beneath the benevolent and warm sun of the Far East, the peoples of the East, gradually civilised, discovered the bac-chi (cay gio, phaong-moc), from whose fibres they made fine, supple paper and brushes softer than silk, marvellous instruments in the nimble fingers of their artisan craftsmen. Through these subtle means of transmission, primitive outlines took the form of designs embellished with thick and thin strokes, under the lightness of the brush and the skill of the hand.

Now, in the winding lands stretching west of the Tianshan Mountains, beneath the scorching sun of Mesopotamia, the peoples found upon the earth's surface granites, diorites, marbles, and hard, gleaming stones, which, piled up as ramparts, established the monuments of Chaldean power and science upon almost indestructible foundations. Then, seizing the hammer, the peoples of that East carved, with the aid of steel points, the primitive characters, which, rising from the surface of the marble under the chisel, flared out into acute triangles and stretched into rigid lines.

Soon these differences, initially due solely to the graphic difficulties encountered in nature, became part of the very essence of hieroglyphs and, through the successive distortions of the characters as civilisations diverged, gave rise to distinct writing systems. Yet, despite everything, the essential nature of the representations remains the same; the spirit of synthesis reconstructs the primitive form and discovers, beneath the veil of the most diverse appearances, the same hieroglyphic sign, luminous and triumphant.

Now, it is precisely because Fohi knew that the hierograms of the 35thcentury BC were merely distortions of the primitive script, and were therefore inadequate representations of abstract and general thoughts, that he employed, to record the Tradition in the only fitting manner—that is to say, synthetically and universally—the linear symbols of *the Trigrams*.

For the writing of the Yijing is of two kinds: the *trigram* for Fohi's text itself; *the hierogram* (primitive character or *Koteou*) for the glosses and paraphrases of the School of Fohi.

The structure of the Yijing thus consists of sixty-four hexagrams, or double trigrams; these sixty-four types derive, through a reverse rotation of two concentric circles, from the eight trigrams; these trigrams derive from the four digrams; and these digrams, from the various positions of the solid line ⎯ and the broken line − −

These two lines are the simplest symbolic figures that have ever existed. Where did Emperor Fohi find such a naive symbolism? Here, as elsewhere, and for the writing that conveys thought as much as for thought itself, Fohi turned neither to celestial interventions nor to invisible powers, but rather

to the nature that surrounded and enchanted his people. It was at eye level that, in his indisputable logic, he drew upon the medium of Tradition to enlighten and guide humanity. Indeed, the historical text of the 'Rites of Tsheou' states that: 'Before drawing the trigrams, Fohi looked up at the sky, then lowered his eyes to the earth, observed its features, and considered the characteristics of the human body and of all external things'. That is to say, the two lines indicate a dual state, or rather, the equality of two states, common to all creation. This linear symbol should be compared with the circular symbol, known throughout Eastern antiquity and revived by the Taoists: *the Yin-Yang*, representing the dual principle—active-passive, masculine-feminine, light-dark, positive-negative, etc.—which, when divided into these two parts by analytical observers, gives rise to the fatal error of Good and Evil, but which, indissolubly one in essence (despite the appearance that the material representation is compelled to give it), constitutes the *Taiky* or *Great Ultimate*, an energetic and absolute symbol, engraved on the pediment of all Temples, and which Laozi placed at the head of all Asian doctrines.

The unbroken line represents the active: the broken line represents the passive; and in both lines and principles, Fohi recognises the essence and unity of perfection, of which they are but aspects. Let us take great care, here more than anywhere else in the world, not to confuse the thing itself with the imperfect form in which we can only represent it, and perhaps even understand it: for the worst metaphysical errors, the worst moral cataclysms, arise from an insufficient understanding and a misinterpretation of symbols. And let us always remember the god Janus, who is depicted with two faces, and yet has but one, which is neither of those we can touch or see.

Such is the interpretation of the symbolism of the lines of Fohi's hexagrams; it clearly shows that the I Ching is a universal book and not a treatise on astronomy, as the Japanese and Latin scholars influenced by Japanese thought have claimed[2] .

The hierograms that constitute the glosses and paraphrases of the School of Fohi (the principal of which are the 'formulas' of Wenwang) are written in primitive characters, known as *Koteou*; these characters are the origin of the 'keys' that still exist, at the present time, in the yellow ideographic script. We no longer have, in the documents of the Far East, the actual script of the School of Fohi; and one might doubt its value and its forms, were it not for the fact that this script, which has not survived in manuscript form, has, like rock, and carved into rock, withstood the test of time and revolutions. The hierograms in question are found in the famous inscription of Yu, on Mount Heng-Chan, and preserved at Si-ngan-fou, the first capital of historical China, a city which remains not only the most epic remnant of Chinese antiquity, but which is still, at the present time, the refuge

[2] Although this view is somewhat that of Mr Philastre, let us take this opportunity to recommend his translation of the Yijing, which is unique owing to the author's knowledge of Chinese characters and the nature of the Chinese people. The very reason that endowed Mr Philastre with immense erudition is the one that shattered his diplomatic career (Annales du musée Guimet, Volumes VIII and XXIII). See Chapter IX.

sacred, which victoriously shelters the rulers of modern China against the military attempts of a united Europe.

Apart from its sculptural merit, this inscription is too interesting for us not to quote it verbatim, at least in part. It is, in fact, contemporary with the Hebrew Flood, and it refers to it. It dates precisely to 2276 BC, that is to say, it predates the oldest Egyptian hieroglyphs by five centuries.

'Relieve me, my advisers, of the burden of governing. To the west and beyond the mountains, the large and small islands, the inhabited plateaus, and the homes of birds and four-legged creatures, are flooded far and wide. Take care of this: drain the waters and build dykes to prevent further flooding.' And further on: 'For a long time I have completely forgotten my own people, in order to repair the damage caused by the flood; but now I can rest: the chaos of nature has vanished: the great currents that came from the South have flowed out to sea.'

It has, of course, long been known that the biblical flood was a partial inundation and a rather minor cataclysm; but as everyone judges things by the good or harm they bring them, Emperor Yu saw only a provincial flood where the Hebrew historian saw the destruction of nature, and consequently the hand of his Jehovah; a few dykes were needed to prevent a similar flood, and it is the Minister of Public Works who here takes the place of the dove from the ark. Once again, Yu's inscription invites us not to take the grandiloquent claims of small nations at face value, and to remember, for example, that in the22ndcentury BC, it did not take much water to drown the Jewish race and power[3] .

The commentaries accompanying Fohi's hexagrams – all of which are now transcribed in modern ideographic script – include: the sayings of Prince Wenwang, founder of the Zhou dynasty (1154 BC); the sayings of Zhou Kong (1122 BC); the 'Ten Wings' of Kongtzeu (Confucius: c. 500 BC); the 'traditional commentary' of Tchengtze (c. 1150 AD); and the '*primitive* meaning' of the famous Tsouhi (1182 AD). Each of these commentators illuminated the text of Fohi and Wenwang with the insights most dear to their minds. And as this text is comprehensive and universal, we shall see its metaphysical, political, magical, moral, social and divinatory meanings emerge one after the other, according to the particular inclinations of the exegetes.

Only their quiet boldness matches the simplicity of their reasoning. Let us remember that Fohi and Wenwang – Fohi in particular – regarded themselves as

[3] Yu's inscription contains much more: if one knows how to read it, as one ought, across the three successive planes. We shall return to this later in a special article, where we shall analyse, apart from this observation on the biblical flood, Emperor Yu's instructions to his advisers and disciples, across the three worlds.

intermediaries of the Eternal Word, without any need to imagine a divine intermediary between this Word and themselves.

This is why the Yijing, which we are about to begin analysing directly, opens with the *tangible* study of Unity and Perfection, that is to say, with the human study of heaven. And we are not obeying a love of paradox, but a love of truth, by placing the *'Diagrams of* God' at the outset of this study.

That the meaning of the formula is shrouded in darkness is beyond doubt: this darkness is due, to a large extent, to the synthetic nature of Chinese reasoning, and to the ideographic character of their script. I quote here
Mr Philastre: 'The Chinese character never has an absolutely defined and limited meaning; the meaning results from its position in the sentence, and also from its use in *this or that book*, and from the interpretation accepted in that instance. The word has value only through its traditional meanings'. Here, the obscurity of the text and the commentaries appears, moreover, as a deliberate intention to give the same combination of characters parallel and equally plausible meanings, which can be read and understood in as many ways as there are degrees of understanding, sciences within humanity, and worlds within the intellectual universe. From these specific characteristics, we recognise that the I Ching is indeed the 'Book', without any epithet, that it is at once synthetic and abstract, logical and divinatory, political and metaphysical, ontological and moral, and that the schools of China are not wrong to consult it and to cite it in so many different respects.

The path of studying Chinese philosophies is not as clearly defined as that of Western philosophies; and it is impossible to strip Chinese thought of a certain ambiguity; our minds would perceive in this, rather than a deliberate ambiguity, a certain confusion, indicative of an inability to reason. Nothing could be further from the truth. Eastern scholarship differs from our own, not only because of race and country, but also because of the era. One should not expect to find, in the descendants of Fohi and the contemporaries of Laozi, those clear and forthright assertions from which we derive a singular pride—assertions which are undoubtedly accurate, but which, by virtue of being narrow and strict, contain only a tiny fraction of the truth; all these infinitesimal fragments, asserted side by side and independently of one another by our analytical minds, conceal the whole truth from our delicate and short-sighted eyes. Thus a face is reflected, with the worst distortions, in a mirror cut into a thousand facets juxtaposed on different planes. Microscopic discussions have rendered us incapable of appreciating and grasping broad syntheses. I would readily compare the feeling of a Westerner transported to China to that of a peasant from the plains, suddenly whisked away to the summit of Mont Blanc; his senses, unaccustomed to the depths and distant horizons, and the unfamiliar thrill of vertigo, would prevent him from savouring the splendour of the landscape. It is a similar sense of unease that seizes us when faced with the systems and modes of Chinese reasoning, ill-prepared as we are, through lack of familiarity, to grasp, within this unalterable order governing the universe, anything other than a complicated theory, in the vastness and depths of which our dim-witted minds grow impatient, are repelled and lose their way, before having understood it.

Anyone wishing to be initiated into the Primordial Tradition, as offered to us by the first monument of knowledge, must be forewarned; he will feel overcome by a vague and singular unease, not only because of the universality of the synthesis, but also because of the generality of the terms employed, the forced impropriety of the interpretations, and the total lack of preparation on the part of Westerners to read and describe, in an analytical language, that which has its perfect meaning and full value only in ideograms. For anyone wishing to penetrate deeply into the innermost recesses of this science and this way of thinking, it is in the original texts, and not in a scholastic summary, much less in a foreign adaptation, that they must seek the necessary guidance and clarity. This is the great flaw in the works of the most distinguished sinologists, such as Stanislas Julien and so many others, to whom a long stay in China, amidst Chinese scholars, would undoubtedly and without hesitation have provided the solutions they sought in vain, amidst thankless labours, at the Sorbonne or the Collège de France; it was a very long stay that enabled Mr Philastre to carry out his work on the I Ching; it was the stay in the Far East that would have enabled the missionaries, and among others Fathers Huc and Prémare, to gain a profound understanding of the most obscure mysteries, had the Roman religious idea, for the sake of which alone they laboured, not led their minds down a single path, and had it not forced them to draw singular conclusions from their work—conclusions they would never have entertained for a moment had their circumstances not made them an inescapable necessity.

For these reasons and under these conditions, it is impossible to shed light on the I Ching other than through Chinese philosophers and reasoning. Yet one must still grasp how this aid is to be sought and applied. One must not do so in the manner in which, for example, Western commentators, through strict formulas and unshakeable deductions, have brought to light all the fine aspects of Greek genius, precisely because Greek genius—from which the genius of the Latin races springs—is quite well suited to our methods of argumentation and intellectual dissection. But, for the same reason that the genius of the Chinese seems to us, at first glance, vague and abstruse, the vast Chinese synthesis would, by such means, have found itself not divided and clarified, but fragmented and destroyed, leaving nothing before us but a battered and crumpled body. The application of one book to the elucidation of another cannot therefore be understood in an absolute sense, neither for ideas nor for terminology. To explain a text by its context would here be the height of naivety, and also of error. But, having grasped the essence of a philosopher's teaching – of Laozi, for example, – and fully grasping the significance he attaches to the terms of the Ancient Study, and then, when faced with a confused text open to multiple interpretations from one of the early Classics, deducing how Laozi would have understood it: this is the only valid way to illuminate Eastern texts by reference to one another, and to make their meaning emerge from so many symbols. They seem divergent; they are merely different. But they all lead to the one truth, just as the waves of the sea, which appear dissimilar in height, colour and direction, nonetheless all flow towards the same destination, under the constant influence of the monsoons and the tides.

# CHAPTER III

# GOD'S CHARTS

Just as a child learns to swim better by being thrown abruptly into the water than by being supported by life belts and lessons from diving instructors, so too is it better for us to plunge headlong—even at the risk of losing our footing at times—into the sacred metaphysics of the Yellow Race. After some initial astonishment and much careful attention, any thoughtful and sensible mind will find its way.

The difference between Western and Eastern conceptions of God and the origin of the Gods, and of the idea of God, is fundamental and absolute. In the West, our alphabetic languages give our subject of study the four-letter name 'God', which is of such marvellous and precise concreteness that its boundaries are visible everywhere; and, still unsatisfied with this designation, Westerners illustrate it with a bearded old man holding a handful of lightning bolts, or with a triangle, in the centre of which there is an eye. Here, what we call God has no name; it is represented by a character called Thien (which, in spoken Mandarin, translates as 'heaven'); this character implies and encompasses a host of special properties, not of heaven itself, but of that which is in heaven or behind heaven. Thus the God of the Yellow Race, in his designation, is not a specific name: it is a general idea. And yet, Fohi, the first historical sage of China, judged that this 'general idea' was entirely insufficient, unjust, and a source of error; and he replaced the character with a geometric design, unspecific, as generalised as possible, and whose form would represent the reasoning one might employ to approach an idea that cannot be conceived; thus this geometric design takes on the value of a metaphysical arcane.

The Westerner's ambition is to be understood; the Easterner's ambition is to be true: in theogony as in metaphysics, as in all transcendental science, these two ambitions are mutually exclusive. We can only grasp the true if it is surrounded and, as it were, swaddled in errors. Our duty is always to distinguish this error—unconscious and necessary—from the truth it conceals; it is also to reduce its thickness and quantity, so that, through this ever-thinning envelope, the truth may finally burst forth.

It was in this spirit that the Yellow Magi constructed the diagrams of God. These diagrams bear the defining epithet 'Perfection'. Two perfections are listed (and consequently, two diagrams of God): active perfection and passive perfection[1]. But in reality there is only one perfection; and let us immediately clear Chinese metaphysics of the charge of dualism levelled against it on this occasion by insufficiently informed minds.

There is but a single perfection, a single idea of God, a single 'initial cause of all things'. This perfection, known as 'active', is the source and potential reservoir of all *activity*; yet it does not act. It is and remains in itself, without any possible manifestation; it is therefore incomprehensible to man, in the present state of the human constitution.

When this perfection has manifested itself, it has, without ceasing to be itself, undergone the modification that renders it intelligible to the human mind; it matters little whether this manifestation is a simple act of will or a genuine action; by the very fact that perfection has acted, it is capable of entering into conceptuality; and it is then called passive perfection (Khouèn). Perfection is one and unintelligible to man: in order that we may speak of it, it must become, or at least we must suppose that it can become, intelligible. And so we represent it by two different diagrams. Yet there is still only one and the same perfection, and only one initial cause.

Let us bear in mind that our mind grasps only number, that it is not capable of grasping Unity, and even less so zero, which is unity prior to any manifestation. Let us also bear in mind that one can only speak of dualism where there are two contrary or different principles; and that two or a hundred aspects of a single principle cannot constitute either dualism or multiplicity. – Here, as everywhere else, the Great Principle is one, and it is in order to situate its unmanifested unity above all possible attempts of human intelligence that the sage offers, for our contemplation and study, not the principle in itself—which cannot be named without being distorted—but the aspect of the Great Principle, manifested and reflected in human consciousness.

I feel compelled to emphasise this point almost to excess, and I shall do so again with regard to the In-yang, or symbol of the Great Ultimate. For it is astonishing and almost ridiculous to see excellent minds reproach a metaphysical system, or an occult tradition, for a dualism which was introduced into it solely because of the present imperfection of the human mind, and in order to make it accessible to that mind. There is indeed a reproach to be made: but it is to themselves that these excellent minds must direct it, chiding themselves for still remaining human. We must resign ourselves to this: we shall never know,

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[1] Khièn and Khouèn. These two general terms are used to denote the idea of God; we continue to render it as Perfection, an inferior term. But we are reluctant to burden transcendental metaphysics with new terminology, bearing in mind that terminologies are subjects of debate, error, and discredit; those who create them, for the apparent needs of their demonstrations, clutter their texts with them in an incomprehensible manner, and cling to them with such affection that often these arid and useless terminologies end up constituting the sole novelty of the proposed system.

as human beings, the truth, and what we believe to be the truth is not the truth, precisely because we understand that it is or that it can be[2] . It is therefore with infinite caution that Tradition encompasses an aspect of the truth – or of God – capable at last of being grasped by our intellect. And so that this aspect is not articulated (and does not consequently give rise to a false statement or misleading interpretations), this aspect is not a character, nor even an idea: it is a design. Such is the arcane, linear and metaphysical, nature of Passive Perfection (Khouèn).

And, to get to the bottom of this question and leave it behind, this aspect is not a reflection. Passive perfection is not a reflection of active perfection, as would be, in water, the reflection of a star, that is to say, half a fiction. Passive Perfection is absolutely an entity, an identical entity, or rather, one that must be identical to the entity of Active Perfection, save for this circumstance: that we can approach it. In other words, Active Perfection, grasped by our imperfect understanding, is Passive Perfection; yet it remains Perfection, and it is in this that its mysterious abstract reality bursts forth.

If we transpose numerical truth onto the divine (or transcendental metaphysical) plane, we may say that Passive Perfection is to Active Perfection as *one* is to *zero*, which, whilst being different *digits*, are but a single *number*, and the first of numbers and the *only number*.

One cannot overemphasise the need to combat this instinctive and formidable error of the human mind, which ascribes to Truth this multiplicity—without which it understands nothing and of which it is the sole example amongst all minds—and which, through unconscious pride, projects its own mental imperfection onto the very face of divinity. This dualism lies at the root of all metaphysical errors. The human mind, forgetting to reason out the necessary juxtaposition of two absolutely identical principles (a juxtaposition necessary so that, through an understanding of the existence of the second, it may admit, without understanding it, the existence of the first), the human mind, inclined towards division and differentiation, soon ascribes to these juxtaposed principles diverse properties, dissimilar appearances, and, immediately thereafter, contrary meanings and antagonistic consequences. And from that moment on, the damage is done; it is irreparable, and it corrodes, at their very roots, the sciences and religions. And there is worse: man, who cannot remain constantly a metaphysician, a logician and a reasoner, quickly becomes sentimental, sensitive, sensual. He drags with him, into this new realm, the error he has created on the mental plane, and for which he alone is responsible. And on this lower plane, he creates, in the monstrous image of his metaphysical dualism, the relativities of Good and Evil; and he establishes laws; and he establishes conventions, and he torments himself with his prejudices, and with the tears and blood he thus sheds, he consolidates his detestable work: he places this moral dualism under the protection of the metaphysical dualism invented by his ignorance and his

[2] For if truth is perfect and we possess the truth, we share in perfection, and we are gods: this supposition seems ridiculous; or, if we are imperfect and yet possess the truth, then truth is not perfect; and in that case, the supposition is truly ridiculous.

pride; and thus, as the keeper of his own prison, he builds, with his illogical hands, the incomprehensible, stupid and deceitful hell that is contemporary society.

The graphic representation of Perfection, as seen at the top of this article, is conceived according to the simplest symbolism. Since *the design* of the infinite idea is indefinite, it comprises nothing better than an element without beginning or end; and thus it is the straight line that can be extended indefinitely in both directions: it ends, of course, in the diagram, at the limit of material necessity, but it does not end in thought, nor in supposition. It is in this respect that, despite appearances, the symbolism of the straight line is superior to that of the closed curved line, or the circumference: the latter, like the serpent biting its own tail—a popular yet false representation of Eternity—seems to have no end as it winds indefinitely upon itself; but, in reality, and precisely, it encloses a space, it defines a surface, which is the circle, which has a measure, and which is therefore finite. And nothing can prevent this definition, that is to say, this inferiority and this notorious inadequacy of the symbol.

On the contrary, the straight line, as one extends it, through perpetual supposition, *becomes depersonalised*, and is the very image of *the indefinite*, since it determines, encloses, *or defines nothing*. Better still: if I suppose any plane generated by this straight line, I have the indefinite nature of space; and if I suppose all the planes generated by this indefinite straight line to be simultaneous, I have *the 'universal* volume', that is to say, the symbol of the infinite. And this is why we see the superiority, almost always unrecognised, of the straight line over the circumference, as a symbolic representation.

If we now conceive of Perfection—that is to say, if our thought transforms active Perfection into passive Perfection—we recognise the absolute identity of these entities in substance, if not in form; and we attach, by the very act of our thinking, to passive perfection, the idea of our multiplicity and our divisibility (a special characteristic of human change and of thought, specific to the human condition).

Thus the symbol of passive perfection must in every respect be that of active perfection, and must furthermore engender the idea of multiplicity (the 'more' that determines it is a metaphysical 'less'). This is why the symbol of passive Perfection will be the indefinite straight line, with an indefinite series of discontinuities. Such is the meaning of the broken line from the point of view of the divisibility of Being, that is to say, from the point of view of the multiplicity of actions and forms. And so we possess two accurate, powerful, and simple symbolisms: it is upon these that the trigrams of Fohi, the hexagrams of the I Ching, and the sixty-four arcana of Evolution are built.

As we have already said, active Perfection does not act, but it is 'core' of all action, and, *from a human perspective*, the *principle of action* is the proof of its perfection, and the starting point for the possibility of its understanding. This is why, when addressing human beings and wishing to help them grasp the

highest human significance of Metaphysics, the Chinese sage places *activity* at the forefront [3]: and the supreme mark of activity, in terms of perfection, is the faculty *of perfect generation*, that is to say, of reproducing oneself without aid. This entirely natural idea – which, without resorting to the slightest play on words, may be called *the 'mother idea'* – is rendered in graphic symbolism by doubling the sign of perfection (whether active or passive, a continuous line or a broken line) with a similar line. Thus the diagram is formed. This digram is precisely the symbolic representation of the Father and the Mother, that is to say, of the means of conception; thus the two lines conceive the third; the Father and the Mother beget the child; and, in symbolism, the trigram immediately emerges from the digram, which is not a permanent state, but a *transition* from Unity to the Triad. Such is the genesis of the trigrams of Fohi.

Let us emphasise this fact, which has profound metaphysical and moral implications: the digraphic state exists only as an instant. In the formidable work of the I Ching and all its commentaries, the existence of the diagram is mentioned once, in the typographical value of a line of Western letters. Thus it is made clear, through a deliberate silence, that this is not a logical state, but merely a necessary instant between the Unity and the Trinity. Only the Father is worthy of existence, and the eternal androgyne separates only to fertilise itself. And the instant is *mathematical*; the father and the mother exist only to create: at the moment of creation, they are united and form but one; at the moment they separate, the seed exists, and they are already three[4] . – One might be interested in extending this principle to all worlds: thus there is no good or evil outside human relativity; thus there is no union of soul and body outside the spirit; thus, to speak in Catholic and Kabbalistic terms, there is no Father and Son without the Holy Spirit: the Christian mystery of the Trinity becomes an axiom; and societies and religions that neglect the Word of Saint John and the Paraclete are nothing but illogical and monstrous conglomerations. We leave to our readers, who are obviously well-informed on all these matters, the pleasure—both subtle and straightforward—of drawing from this metaphysical theorem all the deductions it entails.

Naturally, the trigrams composed of the same lines are those of Perfection. By combining, in every possible position, the unbroken line and the broken line, one obtains eight trigrams, which are the 'Trigrams of Fohi' and the basis of all the metaphysical symbolism of the Yellow Race.

From these trigrams emerge the hexagrams that form the framework of the I Ching. In practical terms, mechanically so to speak, they 'evolve' from one another. By doubling the initial trigrams—that is, by writing them twice, one on top of the other—and inscribing them as one would inscribe an octagon within a circle, one obtains the magic square, commonly known as *the Hado*. If, around the single centre, one makes

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[3] The character K'ien, which represents Perfection in ideograms, is translated into language by the term: *the Activity of Heaven*.

[4] In practice, the Yellow One calculates his age in such a way that he counts ten months from the day of his birth.

By rotating the circle of outer trigrams from left to right, and simultaneously the circle of inner trigrams from right to left, one obtains sixty-four situations of six lines, each different from the others, which constitute the sixty-four arcana of Evolution, the sixty-fifth situation being exactly the first, and reproducing the two hexagrams of Perfection. The explanation, formulas and commentaries on these series constitute precisely the I Ching, whose title, '*Changes in the Circular* Revolution', is thus justified, even graphically, whilst at the same time the fundamental dogma of the Far Eastern Tradition is symbolised in all its modifications and in its final transformation. We shall, moreover, develop this symbolism—so simple and so perfect—in due course.

There is a profound reason for the doubling of the trigrams and their conversion into hexagrams; this reason, which is both human and metaphysical, is familiar to everyone. The trigram – or, to generalise, the ternary concept it represents – is the image of a metaphysical entity that truly exists, yet is infinitely distant from humanity, lying far beyond and above its intellectual horizon. It is reflected in our understanding just as an object is reflected in the water that bathes its base, or as, out at sea, the moon is reflected in the ocean into which it is about to sink. Thus, the celestial trigram and its reflection in our reason produce the hexagram. And here again the ternary principle shines forth; for heaven is reflected upon the earth only through the heart of man; for the monument is reflected in the water only by the light of day; for the soul influences the body only through the Spirit; for the Son communicates the Father's grace, and the Father bestows the Son's merits, only through the power of the Holy Spirit – *Three* become *one*, through the effect of a fleeting and latent *two*. And the hexagram is an *enneagram*, whose celestial trigram is real, whose human trigram is a reflection, and whose spiritual trigram is inscribed in realms so tenuous and fluid that it leaves no trace or witness anywhere, and that logic alone indicates the necessity of its existence.

It is already apparent now, and will become even more so in time, just how many universal ideas the Far Eastern tradition—however distant and remote it may be—has given rise to. At every moment, in the course of these studies—which seem more daunting than they actually are—the application of the ancient principle will spring forth, clear and undeniable, in our own Western methods and traditions, which centuries of white civilisation have transformed, believing them to be perfecting or purifying them. And this will be both a great aid to understanding the doctrine, as well as a powerful comfort to the synthetic minds to whom we wish to address ourselves, to see that the link is not broken—and that it never can be—which binds us to the common origin, from whence we come just as surely as Fohi himself, and to whence we return just as surely as the most devout followers of Fohi. We have nothing to create, nothing to invent, nothing even to explain by new means: we need only not lose what remains to us, and recover what we have lost. And let us be permitted here to say aloud what is thought in private, and what all metaphysicians and occultists of every country know. In the obscuring and forgetting of the sacred sciences, there is a question of race and latitude. The scholars of China and India have forgotten nothing, but we have been separated from them by barbarians. Only

the Ninevites, destroyers of the Vedic sciences, and the Semites, inadequate and cruel copyists of the Egyptian sciences, have created a hiatus between antiquity and the modern age, between Eastern science and Western research. It is by passing by, through, or over these mediocre races that we shall find our way again, and that modern humanity shall reconnect with dignity to its ancestors of the Ram cycle. If the continuation of these studies succeeds in proving these propositions to the greatest number, we shall have begun our work in the best possible way.

But even today, following this simple determination of *the 'graphs of* God', let us emphasise how admirable is the science we follow, how simple is the method we employ. We have declared the God-Being, or Perfection, to be incomprehensible to man. And indeed it is. We have observed how religious systems, held in high esteem by the majority of humanity, have sought to disfigure God, to bring Him closer to us, so as to make Him comprehensible to our understanding. These systems deliberately destroy the metaphysical idea, and thus offer us nothing but error; or, by establishing anthropomorphism, they present us with a thesis as crude as the fetishism of uncultivated races. And despite these distortions, they fail to satisfy us.

In keeping with the Primordial Tradition, we did not wish to—nor, indeed, could we have—imitate these diminishing transformations. God – Perfection – remains and will remain incomprehensible to us as long as we ourselves remain human. But this perfection which we have been unable to understand, which we have been unable to discuss, reason about or name, we have sketched; and in sketching it, *we have not given it any contours*; we have not *completed it*; yet we know it with our own eyes. Through a series of logical and metaphysical arguments, without having established a single *a priori* proposition, without having demanded the acceptance of a single *postulate*, without having imposed belief in the slightest mystery, we have, in six lines, perfectly symbolised, without destroying or diminishing it, this notion of God which no one, save God himself, could name or understand. This simple outline, this linear abstraction, this metaphysical enigma—we feel deeply that it is, and cannot be otherwise than as it is presented here. And we hold in our hands this marvellous instrument, by which we can confidently establish the ideal, complete and axiomatic representation of the inintelligible. We do not understand it: we do not name it: we do not write it down – we see it.

And it is this symbol, more admirable than the most magnificent ideas conceivable to the human mind, which will here be the foundation and starting point of all our propositions, just as that which it represents is the inevitable goal of our existence and our endeavours.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE SYMBOLS OF THE WORD

As we have already said, the spirit of generalisation, which was the philosophical spirit of humanity before the invention of analysis and methods of dissection by the applied and mechanical scientific mind of modern times, the spirit of generalisation has remained intact amongst the Eastern races; and it is the synthetic, mathematical and logical method that forms the core of the most ancient traditional texts, which the respect of the custodial peoples has handed down to us uncorrupted and untouchable right up to our highly civilised and individualistic times.

This spirit of generalisation applies, with infinite variety, a single axiom or principle to all sciences, to all social conditions, to all intellectual realms, to everything that can be done, said or thought in all places and at all times throughout human and universal history.

And the more fundamental an axiom appears, the more eternal a principle seems in its concept and the more accurate in its graphic representation, the more ardently its applications are sought and the more precisely they are determined.

Thus, the *'Graphs of* God'—conceived with a spirit of universal synthesis in thought and executed with mathematical rigour—are regarded by commentators on the Traditional Books as the key to all human ideas and situations, as the beginning and end of all sciences, and as the mystery within which one must seek both the explanation of all unknowns, the general solution to all problems, the rules of all politics, and the prescriptions for all social economies and all individual moral codes.

The *'Graphs of* God' are therefore no longer, in common usage, merely the 'Drawing' of an abstract general idea and an entity inconceivable to modern man. With their six indefinite lines, they constitute, as it were, the metaphysical staff upon which eternal harmony is inscribed, and upon which the particular chords of every knowledge of the human mind are placed, so as to find their proper meaning within the concert of the universe. To use a simpler and cruder comparison, yet one that is just as accurate from a graphic perspective, every piece of knowledge of the human mind is akin to one of those diplomatic dispatches, where, amidst useless clutter and a jumble intended to mislead and repel the common folk and the indiscreet, lie the solutions to the problems upon which the life and glory of nations depend. Falling into the hands of the ignorant, these letters remain incomprehensible: they have meaning and effect only for those who write them and those for whom they are intended. Thus human knowledge is abstruse even to those who

studied it in depth, if they pursued individual studies, and if they focused their efforts on specific areas.

And the '*Graphs of* God' are the 'grid' which, when superimposed upon the formless text, brings out the useful parts, eliminates the inert parts, and, within its intervals—*which are always arranged in the same way for all texts*—reveals to those who know the necessary truths, the guiding mysteries of all sciences and the driving forces behind all human actions.

Let us therefore enter fully into the symbolism of yellow. The *Diagrams of God* will be of great assistance to us in this, if we know how to relate everything to this principle, and if we remember that all interpretations, all images, all precise determinations are the embroidery woven onto this eternal warp, onto this metaphysical canvas, without which no fabric could be woven, without which no system could stand.

By combining the 'situations' of *the Graphs of God* with one another, by studying, first in isolation and then in parallel, the features that compose them, we obtain all the ideas of the brain and all the insights of consciousness. In the applications made of them, these situations are modified; these features change in their personification and object; within them and between them manifests the perpetual movement, which is the result of primordial activity and the consequence of the potential activity of Perfection. Thus this continuous movement perfectly represents the series of transformative modalities which, one after another, constitute the existence of the tangible and perceptible universe—modalities for which the tetragrammatic formula (which we shall study in the next chapter) provides the underlying cause and formal explanation. Thus, each of the ideograms and each of the strokes of the ideograms, participating in the Principle of Activity, possesses its own activity, by which it moves freely, in accordance with the freely chosen path of which it is one of the expressions (and the only immediate expression, at the moment in question).

It follows that each of the strokes, as and while it is being considered, acquires a personality, due to the manifestation of its particular activity. It therefore seems logical and sensible that intellectual and phonetic symbolism (we shall see later the reason for these juxtaposed adjectives) should have given them the express form of Omnipotence and Omni-Activity, that is to say, the form of the DRAGON, 'omniscient master of the paths of the right and the left' (Phan-Khoatu, I).

*The Legend of the Dragon*. "Dragons and fish have the same origin; yet how different is the destiny of each! The fish cannot live outside its element; but let a light cloud descend towards the ground, and one sees the dragon soar into the air." So sings the eleventh stanza of this famous ballad: The Joyful Life, to the strains of which, throughout the Far East, old scholars smile, and little children fall asleep.

It alludes to the legend of the Dragon, which we cite because therein lies the origin of the Mosaic Genesis, the Sinaitic fiction of the Law, and perhaps also the symbol of alchemical synthesis.

— The water that flows upon the earth, say the old storytellers, is like the cloud that flies through the sky: their nature is alike; only their

appearance differs. And that is the important thing, for moisture fertilises the universe, just as the way of heaven fertilises the thoughts of men. Nothing is better, more fleeting, more active, more universal than water: but if their actions are not united, the water of the sky can do nothing on the earth, the water of the earth can do nothing on the cloud of the sky. Thus, in the water of the earth the fish, in the water of the sky the bird Hâc[1] live apart and they are imperfect. But if the storm raises the waters or the heat of the day evaporates them; and if a light mist descends upon the ground, or if a great wind drives the clouds towards the earth, then the union of the two waters—earthly and heavenly—is made: the Hâc bird descends towards the earth like the clouds, the fish rises towards the heavens like the water of the river; when they meet, the Hâc bird lends its wings to the fish, the fish lends the bird its body and scales; amidst the claps of thunder and amidst the roaring waters appears the Great Fish, upon whose back are written the secret precepts of the Law. And as soon as its back touches the low-hanging clouds, it becomes the Long Dragon and vanishes into the air with the clouds that cover and carry it away.

I would be quite reluctant to offer an explanation of this popular legend, which is clearer than all the Mosaic parables and the Judeo-Christian legend of the apple. The youngest pupils in Far Eastern schools comment on it and strip it of its fable with the greatest of ease. I imagine this will be no more than a game for attentive Western researchers, who will be far more grateful to me for inviting them to undertake a little personal work of analogical interpretation than for appearing, through idle clarifications, to cast insulting doubt on their insight.

I shall, however, emphasise certain points worthy of reflection; heaven and earth are truly one, in reality. In our eyes, they are united by a universal vehicle; and the Chinese Sage has taken, as a symbol of this vehicle, what may seem to be *the most subtle of substances*, namely, evaporated water. Infinitely subtle, yet always material—such is the characteristic of the universal vehicle; and here the Chinese Sage converges with theosophical doctrine (which is hardly surprising, since the doctrines are closely related) and also with Platonic doctrine, and with the assertions of the Gnostic school and of St Clement of Alexandria regarding the materiality of the human soul.

Let us also note that ‘Perfection’ exists only through the union of Heaven and Earth, that it is in this union alone that the Dragon manifests itself, and that, as soon as it manifests, it vanishes into the air. This symbol has two meanings: one is that the universe is always in a state of extreme activity; the other is that Perfection is neither visible to human eyes nor intelligible to the human mind; it vanishes if seen or understood by us, and is no longer Perfection. Thus the Dragon is a symbol that man imagines, but which does not exist for him. Yet it truly exists in the total union realised through the universal vehicle.

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[1] The symbolic and legendary crane.

Let us therefore take this symbol of the Dragon, whilst finding it, if you will, childish in its language; but let us retain it as an excellent image, and as a convenient shorthand in metaphysical propositions.

I said earlier that it was a perfect intellectual and phonetic symbol. The explanation of the legend applies to the intellectual aspect: the phonetic aspect is even more intriguing, and generalises and clarifies all the preceding data. What, then, in Yellow metaphysics, is this symbolic Dragon? What, then, is this universal vehicle, which is like *the aura* of the symbol? It is quite precisely the *Word*, not only in the minds of scholars and commentators, but in the demonstration of philology itself.

We are, in fact, familiar with the Platonic and Alexandrian concept of the LOGOS. The root 'LOG' is pronounced with great emphasis, as a long syllable. *It is exactly the name of the ideogram for the Dragon*. This is LONG[2] , with a long O and a short, voiceless N, and it is pronounced LOGUE (with a silent E) in the viceroyalties of central China. Thus philology provides striking evidence for metaphysics. There has never been but one truth; the symbols of this truth differ, but the pronunciation of its very name is identical everywhere. And the Platonic Logos and the Word of the Apostle John, which, without fully understanding it, Christians exalt at the conclusion of all their sacrifices, have no more immediate representation, nor more exact symbolism throughout all humanity, than this universal and invisible Dragon, which, from the heights of Heaven, covers all Eastern philosophies with its mysterious shadow.

Khièn: The action of Heaven is activity. The gifted man imitates it by striving ceaselessly. (Yijing: Traditional commentary by Chengzi and Confucius on the first hexagram).

*The gifted man*, who is mentioned throughout the I Ching, and for whose benefit the precepts of the I Ching were formulated, is a concept specific to the yellow races. It would be easy – and others have done so – to pile up volumes of commentaries on this concept in order to determine its exact meaning. Thus, in other languages, we find the Initiates, the Magi, the High Priests, the Just Judges, the Saints, the Blessed, the Mahatmas and other terms still. Let us, as regards the gifted man, stick to the simple and wise definition of the Chinese Tradition. *The gifted man*, it says, is a scholastic term corresponding to a state of perfection that is inferior to perfection and superior to wisdom. Let us be content, at least from the point of view of the expression, with this definition

[2] I refer those curious about philology to the text of the Yijing itself, found in Philastre's translation (Annales du Musée Guimet), and to the charts and grammars by Father S. Couvreur, S.J., a missionary in Cheou-li, printed at Hokien-fou in 1884, and still quite frequently found in Paris.

elastic; let us conceive that there are several stages in the state of the gifted man; and let us ask only of circumstances to tell us, for each particular case, at what stage, intellectual and psychological, the gifted man has arrived on the path to perfection.

The raison d'être, says Tsheng-tse, has no visible form, so an image is used to clarify the meaning. Thus, as the legend goes, the Dragon, through the universal vehicle, ascends the six lines of the K'ien, where it occupies six different positions, and, as it passes, gives meaning to each of the lines, just as an acoustic series, when inscribed on a musical stave, produces a harmonic chord, of which it is, as an expression, the sole owner, but of which the lines of the stave are the translator and the *vehicle*.

There are therefore as many human staves as there are hexagrams, that is to say, sixty-four. Let us examine in detail the 'passage of the Dragon' through the K'ien, the hexagram of perfection in itself. Not only will this serve as a useful analogy for the metaphysical explanation of the other hexagrams; but, above all, it is from the first hexagram that Chinese sages and philosophers, in all branches of human wisdom, have drawn their principal and finest teachings[3] .

The Dragon, 'intelligence whose modifications are limitless, symbol of the transformations of the rational way (tao) of activity expressed by K'ien' (I Ching: chap. I, § 8, commentary by T'ung-tse), rests upon the first line (the lower, positive line, since it is, like all those of the hexagram, unbroken); and it represents 'the starting point of the beginning of beings'. It is the '*Hidden Dragon*'.

The extreme activity of Perfection does not yet occur, nor is it revealed through any act of will, nor even through any thought; it is therefore hidden, that is to say, incomprehensible to man. This is the period of *non-action*. And by the word 'period' one must understand the idea of the metaphysical state, just as, by the word 'situation', one must understand the 'geometric locus', all concepts here being independent of the relativities of time and space.

Placed on the second line, the Dragon emerges: activity begins to make itself felt on the surface of the earth: this is the 'Dragon in the rice field'. The intense activity of heaven is not yet manifest, but man senses that it exists, just as a being in the rice field is hidden by the rice, and though one cannot see it, one knows it is there because of the rippling of the surface as it passes. We note here that the second line is the *central* line of the lower trigram; it is therefore, so to speak, the summary of its general expression. We also note that there is a meaning to be drawn from its comparison with the central line of the upper trigram, which is its counterpart (system of correspondences). This meaning gives the general tendency of the hexagram. As the two corresponding lines here are both positive, the result is that the meaning of K'ien is *reinforced*, that is to say, the activity of heaven is extreme,

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[3] In every situation of the Dragon, recall the journey of the Legend.

continuous, eternal, and that Heaven is inconceivable apart from the idea of its activity. This is what we had already highlighted in a previous chapter; and, here as elsewhere, the meanings of the symbolic significance of the six lines corroborate the already known principles of metaphysics and the experimental.

This second situation is perfectly summed up by this comparison from Shiseng: 'The positive ether begins to generate, just as the light of the sun begins to illuminate all things, before the sun appears on the horizon'.

Positioned on the third line, the Dragon manifests itself; it occupies the upper position of the first trigram: this is the moment in the legend when, rising to the crest of the roaring waters, it is about to launch itself and reveal its true nature. If the Dragon's scales emerge from the waters, then mankind comes to know science and the law. This is the *'visible Dragon*'. The ceaseless activity, having reached the top of a trigram, ascends the abyss that separates it from the second trigram. There is cause for great caution. And we shall apply this advice immediately, just as it is given. There is both delicacy and danger in 'seeing the Dragon's back'—that is, in knowing Science and the Law—if one is not sufficiently prepared by previous states. (Cf. the Edenic state and the legend of the forbidden fruit). This is the *will to expansion inherent in all beings*, most perfect since it is the crowning achievement of activity, yet most dangerous, since it may lead to multiplicity, that is to say, to forms and disunity.

Placed on the fourth line, the Dragon tends to leave the world, that is to say, to disappear, since, being manifested, it would, if it remained, become intelligible to man, and would no longer be Perfection in itself; but it does not yet fly away; 'it is like the fish leaping out of the water, with the will but without the means to vanish: this is the *leaping Dragon*, equally ready to fade into the ether of the celestial spaces and into the depths of the abysses, where lies the place of its rest'. (Yijing. Ch. I, § 14; commentary by Tsouhi.)

Ceaseless activity, at the end of the leap, may take the Dragon's wings and vanish upwards, or retain the fish's fins and vanish downwards: there is therefore freedom to advance or retreat. Herein lies the symbol *of* the *freedom and independence with which the universe moves* and enters its path (Tao). The situation is indeterminate; but whatever the solution, we see that the true goal of the movement of activity is absolute rest, which lies beyond human powers. (This is Nirvana, intelligible but inaccessible to the human being as we know it).

Placed on the fifth line, the Dragon, fully manifested, acts in its fullness and governs the world. It has left the earth to vanish, but on the verge of reaching the limits, it has not yet vanished, and its beneficent influence spreads everywhere; this is the *flying Dragon*, which, in this instant, brings about, by its very sight alone, the golden age of humanity. This is *the joyful expansion of the Universe into the Totality, which never ceases to be Unity*. Extreme activity constitutes this totality; the presence of the Dragon constitutes this unity; and, to put it in less metaphysical terms, creation exists in its entirety, yet it has no *form*.

Let us recall here that the fifth line is the central line of the upper trigram, and that it is the sympathetic counterpart of the second line: and let us note that the

The second line represents an *unarticulated* will to act, and the fifth line represents that *very* action.

Placed on the sixth line, the Dragon disappears; 'the proper height,' says Tsouhi, 'has been exceeded, the extreme unity has been reached, there is an excess of elevation'. Of course, this commentary must be understood only in relation to the visible universe. It is here that *the 'soaring* Dragon' begins to disappear; and with it begins to disappear too that state of absolute perfection, which brought with it the regret of the impossibility of its maintenance (due both to relative perfection and to the extreme activity of the heavens). 'That which is completely accomplished,' says Confucius, 'cannot last long.' And so man is so imperfect that the very idea of perfection brings with it the fear of losing it. Here lies tangible creation, or rather the *divisibility of unity through the multiplication of forms*, and the establishment of the relative duality of passive perfection—intelligible to man—through the disappearance of the Dragon, which symbolised Unity through the universal vehicle. This is the current stasis we are traversing, within the cycle to which our humanity belongs. And humanity's regret gives rise to its singular desire, which psychologists might call the need for idealism, and which is, in essence, the desire to return to the state of unity, to replace passive perfection with active perfection—which we do not understand, but whose necessary existence we know—the desire, in a word, to *see the Dragon again*[4] .

Such is the metaphysical harmony inscribed in the section formed by the first hexagram of the I Ching. It would take a whole volume to deduce, on this very plane, all the data of the related sciences: Genesis, Creation, Cosmogony, Theogony, Theology, Ontology, Universal Synthesis, the origin of human laws, and so on and so forth. We shall certainly not go into such detail or make such commentaries. Such a task, which, once the foundation of knowledge is laid, is relatively straightforward, must be left, as an interesting exercise and also as a worthwhile intellectual workout, to the intellect of the researchers, whose mindset will, through this research, become better suited to the mindset required to grasp the entire subject, and better equipped to follow, through their synthetic approach, the developments that will follow.

But, as we said at the outset, it is not merely the metaphysical interpretation that is superimposed upon the scope of the hexagram of perfection. There are all the sciences outside of metaphysics and its younger sisters; there is politics, social economics, ethics, divination; and each, through analogical work, finds, along this scope, and by following the '*march of the six* Dragons', solutions capable of satisfying all the intellectual needs of our humanity.

Let us see, for example, in a few lines, how the initiate finds here guidelines for his conduct as a magician, for his particular ascetic practice.

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[4] It is understood that the symbolism of the Dragon, as explained here, lies beyond time and space, above individuals, and applies only to syntheses. The next chapter will outline the symbolism of their path in relation to what is known in the West as the creation of the visible Universe.

*Hidden Dragon*. – The gifted man must regulate his conduct according to the activity of the heavens; the gifted man, not yet being instructed, the will of the heavens is hidden from his inadequate eye: he therefore remains shrouded in his shell of imperfect mortality. The gifted man must therefore meditate, remain silent, and strive to develop himself through study and contemplation. If he were to act whilst the dragon is hidden, he would not measure up, and would fall into an error that would be detrimental to his future.

*Dragon in the Rice Field*. – The gifted man is aware of his virtue, but cannot yet leave the earth[5] . He gradually improves others through his teaching; but he is not yet permitted either to command or to reveal himself. He must only endeavour to follow the fortune and example of the Magi who preceded him.

*Visible Dragon*. – The gifted man, placed in a position inferior to his merits, is in danger; he must act with caution; for through his virtue he attracts the sympathy of the universe, and through this sympathy, the hatred of his superiors. But whether he withdraws or remains, let him always take care to follow the normal path (tao).

*Leaping Dragon*. – When the gifted man acts, it is never without regard to the moment in which he acts. He has therefore increased his merits and virtue so as to be distinguished at a precise and specific moment; he is free to advance or retreat; he has retained all his freedom; he may inspire others through resplendent virtue, just as he may descend into meritorious humility; in this situation, he must be guided by the circumstances.

*Flying Dragon*. – The gifted man occupies the superior position that suits him; having reached the highest peaks of intelligence, it is a pleasure to look down upon the man equally gifted in virtue, to aid him with his examples, and to associate him with his power. When one is at the height of one's powers, one must act.

*Soaring Dragon*. – Infinite beauty is difficult to preserve. Therefore, the gifted man must know when to advance and when to retreat so as never to risk losing it. One must never commit excesses in one's actions, even if they are good.

Likewise, in politics, the path of the Prince and the path of the subject are determined by the march of the Dragons. We shall reserve the explanation of this for later consideration. And, to conclude a discussion that could go on indefinitely, let us present, without comment, the six short, simple and substantial aphorisms through which Confucius, with his customary clarity and conciseness, determines, based on the march of the Dragons, the proper conduct of the ordinary citizen. This quotation will give a perfect idea of how the Chinese sages understand moral law.

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[5] One is free to attach whatever psychological significance one wishes to this proposition.

1°) Do not change with the times; do not cling to fame; shun the world; feel no sorrow at not being appreciated or known by men.

2) Sincerity in every word; prudence in one's actions; guarding against falsehood; improving one's age, without boasting, through one's transformative virtue.

3) To hold a high position without pride; to hold a lowly position without complaint.

4) Perfect one's abilities; seize the opportune moment. 5) Act, and,

through one's action, save the universe.

6) Guard against being too noble to have an occupation, and too high-ranking to have friends.

# CHAPTER V

# THE FORMS OF THE UNIVERSE

I am well aware that, in their extreme generality, the 'Symbols of the Word' may have seemed even more vague than abstract. But apart from the fact that their brilliance is revealed only when one seeks it by consulting the general text, with a view to a particular and precise application[1] , we can immediately shed light on the K'ien and the symbol of the march of the Dragons by studying the tetragrammatic formula which Prince Wenwang, Fohi's son-in-law, placed at the head of the I Ching, beneath the very ideogram of the K'ien.

Wenwang's tetragram provides, with great conciseness, the key to universal phenomenology, which we have come to call: the creation of the world. This term, which states a fact (creation, that is to say, in common parlance, the emergence from nothingness), sets the stage, for the races that employ it, for an unconscious begging of the question and a countless number of metaphysical and logical difficulties. To have invented this word, before having proved that it corresponds to an intellectual concept or a material event, is a symptom quite characteristic of the state of the Aryan brain, distorted by the Semitic nudge. (And Jehovah alone knows how powerful that nudge was!)

Let us prepare ourselves immediately not to sacrifice our logic to this unprecedented and entirely questionable *a priori assumption*. Wenwang's tetragram, whose generality alone does not yield to abstraction, neither denies (nor, for that matter, affirms) the fact in itself; it seems that the material realisation or non-realisation of the idea matters exceedingly little to tradition; but the tetragram situates the event outside of time and space; that is to say, it strips it of all objectivity, and keeps it within that realm from which we Westerners had no right to remove it: the realm of pure idea and metaphysical logic.

Perhaps all cosmogonies, and even the Sinaitic one, could be summed up in a single doctrine, if we were only willing not to introduce, into the realm of universal creation, the anthropomorphism with which we have defiled the divine realm; and if, under the pretext of paying homage to a creator whom we make man, we

[1] We must bear in mind this sentence, which is included here deliberately. For it is the beginning of the entire divinatory science of the I Ching, understood naturally from a magical perspective, and not from that 'horoscopic' perspective from which practitioners in the Far East, just like their Western counterparts, know how to derive a livelihood.

we do not place the most concrete materialism at the heart of our modern and peculiar religions.

We must therefore strive to forget the conventional mediocrity in which the childhood of Western nations was lulled. And if we follow this advice from now on, it seems certain that, in practice, we shall reap the greatest benefit from the ascent of the Dragons through the Diagrams of God.

But, above all, we shall be prepared to grasp, in all its metaphysical abstraction, the Tetragram of Wenwang, the initial cause, the modification and the final transformation of the Universe.

The Tetragram, the mystery of the Universe, has yet another significance. And this is perhaps no less considerable, from the perspective of the unification of the philosophical systems of the East. For it is indeed from Wenwang's Tetragram, that is to say, from the very essence of the I Ching, that all of Taoism has sprung. When we study this admirable system of logic and pure morality, we shall return to this lineage. For now, it will suffice to state this, and indeed to specify that, in formulating these tetragrams, Wenwang was the Forerunner of Laozi. The entire Taoist cosmogony is contained therein, and all that follows is pure Taoism.

We have already encountered this mysterious hierogram of the Tao three times, which for so long remained incomprehensible. Let us state immediately, without delving into insights that will have their place in another part of this work, that by *Tao* (which is commonly and fairly accurately translated as *'the Way'*) we must understand the series, the sum and the result of all the modifications of the Universe, or, if one prefers for the moment, the various states of the manifested Ch'ien, independent of all objective relations.

UYAN: HENG: LI: TSHENG: *Initial cause*: *freedom*: *goodness*: *perfection*. Such is Wenwang's ideographic tetragram. And the Yijing adds these simple words, which constitute the 'traditional commentary' on the formula: 'How great is the initial cause of activity! All things owe to it the beginning of their constitutive ether; it is the whole of heaven. The clouds move: the rain spreads its effect; the seeds of beings perpetuate themselves in form. Universal life acts in an endless movement. The end and the beginning are illuminated by a great light. The Way is change and transformation: every thing conforms exactly to its nature and destiny, and maintains, by harmonising with them, the utmost harmony; this is goodness and perfection."

The tradition explaining these mysteries, which we are about to set out, is the work of Tsheoukong, son of Wenwang; it was compiled, or codified as it were, by Tsheng-tse and Tsouhi. As we have said: the objectively predominant quality of K'ien is activity; and activity radiates energy and will, whereby Being begins to show that it is. Therein lies the entire Universe currently visible within our evolutionary circle and within the human stasis known as creation.

The determinative formula, thus specified by Wenwang in its four ideograms, manifests and 'accompanies' the Universe, from the seed of will, which was its Genesis, to its full blossoming.

*A.* The volitional cause (beginning) of all beings.

*B*. The possibility of creation (growth) of all beings.

*C*. The faculty of fulfilment (action) of the conditions of all beings.

*D*. The normal and perfect development (evolution) of all beings.

These four ideograms, which open and close the cycles of the Universe upon themselves, are as popular as the crescent among the Turks or the cross among Christians. They have, over other symbols of humanity, the advantage of containing within them, in an explicit manner, the summary of the entire doctrine applicable to present-day humanity.

They find their *flat, seal-like* expression in the graphic symbol of the Yin-Yang (Taiky or Great Ultimate), which we shall explain in the chapter dealing with the human condition.

The four states indicated by Wenwang's tetragram formula are called: *qualities of substance* (Khièn), but qualities that are entirely inherent and integral to the entity of the *substance* (in which respect they differ precisely from the Western meaning attached to *the* word *'quality'*, which we cannot, however, replace with any other). But we derive no disadvantage from this, for, following the excellent Chinese method, this integral quality is taken as the *substance* itself, and is identified with it, at least momentarily, for the sake of ease of understanding: this identification is, moreover, of the utmost accuracy.

We shall not introduce any new terminology into the cosmogonic system we are studying here.

It is pointless to try to familiarise the reader with the meanings of the ideograms; and however imprecise they may be, we shall confine ourselves to their translation into ordinary language: initial cause: freedom, good, perfection[2] .

The *Initial Cause of Perfection* (Khièn-uyan) is, says Tsouhi, the Great Principle from which the virtue of heaven flows; it is above all the omnipotence of this principle that is considered; included therein are, potentially, Will and Force. The principle being active, the possibility of the birth of all beings constitutes its power and greatness; and it is this greatness that constitutes the beginning. The beginning of Being is the starting point of its object, that is to say, the principle of causality, the first manifestation of Perfection, the genesis of all things, and especially of the following three terms of the tetragrammaton. Moreover, it is the principle of causality considered in its efficient greatness, that is to say, the *Universal Cause*. Hence, *Freedom* is nothing but free expansion: *Good* and *Perfection* are nothing but the just consequence. It is at once the purity of substance, the universality of the cause, and

[2] Whenever these expressions refer to one of the parts of the tetragrammaton, they will be printed in italics.

the infinity of the effect. Such is the metaphysical doctrine. From a cosmogonic perspective, it is the *assertion* of the possibility of the Universe.

There would be here – and here, as elsewhere, one will soon realise – volumes of deductions and considerations to be written. We have neither the time nor the space for this: above all, we have no inclination for it. It is in the reader's mind, let us repeat it once more, that these deductions and reflections must take place. Here we require the reader not to be an ordinary reader, but a studious and attentive one. As tradition dictates, for the sake of his own education, he must be his own master and a collaborator with his guides. The task which we voluntarily leave him to accomplish here is a sure guarantee of this indispensable collaboration, and of the fruitful excellence of his dispositions.

Thus, the *original cause* is the primary attribute of Perfection (Khièn), and Perfection and the *original cause* are one and the same. From the *initial cause* emerge, potentially, all universes, which are contained therein in embryonic form. Let us press these two principles closely together: we shall deduce the metaphysical impossibility of the existence of evil, in itself. We shall see multiplications, divisibilities, divisions: hence insufficiencies, objective obscurations, relative absences. Nowhere shall we see evil *as a principle*. And everywhere, as proof of our metaphysical premise, we shall recognise that it does not exist. And thus, with this shameful dualism, this fatal error, this initial misunderstanding, all the systems devised to abolish it, and all the heavenly punishments imagined to punish it, disappear.

There is no paradox here. We believe we see evil in the things from which we suffer: this is proof of our selfishness; it is also a sign of our inadequacy. Evil exists only through the idea we form of it, through the belief we place in it: it exists only within us. And we perceive relative evil where we are unable to see a link in the chain of universal Good. All error therefore stems from our inadequacy and our incapacity. This inadequacy stems from our relativity, that is to say, from our form, that is to say, from our analytical division, that is to say, from the multiplicity of beings. We shall see that this multiplicity flows continuously, that it exists in time, that it is objective. All conceptions, which are created within its milieu and on its plane, are not, consequently, pure Ideas, nor aspects of Truth.

They are fleeting, unstable, erroneous. And, among them, the conception of evil is the archetypal conception of the deficient state of consciousness in which we find ourselves. And to clarify metaphysically a mental state, which is dangerous only because it is so widespread, it must be said that our conception of the existence of evil is solely created by this intellectual nonsense and this fundamental error, whereby we unconsciously attribute to the objective and to relativities the character and functions of the subjective and the absolute[3] .

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[3] We shall discuss this subject further in the study of Confucianism. But let us repeat here a crude, even mediocre, yet very striking comparison. Light exists; *we see it*; darkness does not exist. There is more or less light. There is no darkness. Even in the deepest nights, there is a point of comparison with the

Applied to existing humanity, the *initial cause*, as we have just developed its metaphysical expression, is none other than *the Idea of Life*, the principle by virtue of which beings are brought into being. 'The Idea of Life,' says Tsouhi, 'is precisely humanity (Gèn) in the sense of "*Solidarity of the species*".' This word *gèn*, which implies, just as much as perpetuity, the shared existence of beings, is the most frequently used word, even in ordinary conversation.

All who have travelled through China remark with astonishment how much this impersonal, delicate notion—*contrary to individualism*—occupies the minds of all Chinese people[4]. One must not, however, believe that this is a mere observance of traditional memory, without practical application.

With their habit of strict application, the Chinese have drawn from this concept its highest and most immediate consequence: that of *human solidarity*, of which the *gèn* has become the direct expression, and whose fraternal precepts are applied daily and everywhere, as the first and also the most natural of duties.

Thus, from a metaphysical dogma, brought down to the psychological level and put into practice on a social scale – so consistently that this practice has become a habit and a necessity – flow the relative prosperity and fruitful stability of the people and their institutions. It would be interesting to demonstrate the validity of this truth as applied to these final corollaries, and to show therein an original solution—yet as simple and as perfect as possible—to those social issues that so recklessly unsettle the West today.

Here is what Tradition[5]has to say on the subject: 'If, in relation to the Idea of life, one presents the misfortunes of others, pity immediately arises; if it is a matter of the repulsion inspired by vice, duty arises; if it is a matter of modesty, it is propriety and obedience to the Rites; if it is a matter of pros and cons, it is Reason".

These alternations, thus set out, explain the logical and marvellous consequences that naturally follow from them. We shall study them when we come to Confucian philosophy; but let us establish at once that the general conduct of the people and citizens follows from the following: once the relative necessities of existence and coexistence among beings, and the interconnection of interests, are recognised, the same principle is applied to them, which transforms itself, according to each particular circumstance, into special qualities, all having as their essential basis the virtue of the Tetragram. Thus the wise man determines his action by assessing material and social realities through the scientific and metaphysical lens. It is therefore the *Gèn* (or social Khièn uyan) set against the states of human life,

less profound nights. This term of comparison is precisely the *light* that remains, diffused, even in the worst opacity. But absolute darkness does not exist; it is even inconceivable, since it could only exist if one did not see it, that is to say, if it escaped the very sense that can perceive it, and that is nonsense in the objective realm.

[4] See some remarkable examples of this in *La *Cité Chinoise** by M. G. E. Simon, French Consul in China (*Nouvelle Revue*: 1885).

[5] Tsouhi; Essay topics.

on which depend the birth and exercise of the qualities that make a man good, that is to say, happy.

Whilst the first term of the tetragram indicates 'the Origin or gift of being', the second term (heng) expresses the 'Freedom of Heaven's Action'. Beings, says the Great Commentary, begin to enter the stream of form. There is no distinction between them, but they will take hold, first of *uniform* existence, then of the external forms that will distinguish them in our eyes. There is therefore a *uniform* existence, then *multiform* existences; as for *informal* existence, it is not mentioned here, for it is precisely in perfection. And it can only be mentioned in perfection. This is Eternity. Existence in itself does not, and logically cannot, form part of any kind of creation; one cannot suppose, without falling into absurdity, a 'spontaneous generation' on the metaphysical plane, and perhaps also on any other plane whatsoever. The 'root' of the Universe is eternal, and consequently inevitable; all that exists exists outside of forms. Here bursts forth like an axiom this truth, so often obscured and misunderstood, that all that is immortal is eternal.

Were it not for the risk of using an inappropriate term to convey a false image of a true idea, one might say that this 'Freedom' represents the moment of the creative will immediately preceding the moment of actual creation; between the first and third terms of the tetragrammaton, the second is humanly imperceptible, yet necessary to the logic of concepts.

A rough comparison will better illustrate the significance of the symbol: the water in a canal, confined on three sides by stone walls and on the fourth by the gates of a lock, remains stable and motionless. Should the lock suddenly open, the water loses its equilibrium and plunges abruptly into the lower reach. Now, we may suppose that the sluice gate is removed in a mathematical instant; this instant is not the moment when the water begins to flow, but precedes it by a fraction of a second: for the water falls only because the obstacle has disappeared, and the effect can never coincide exactly with the cause that produces it. There is therefore an imperceptible and fleeting moment when the water is no longer in equilibrium, yet does not fall: it *is* merely *about to* fall. This is the moment which, in the tetragram of the Formation of the Universe, constitutes *Freedom* (*heng*) between the potentiality of the creative will and the emergence of forms.

But, on the metaphysical plane, this moment—which is both a geometric point and a 'state of universal consciousness'—is boundless. If it seems to us brief and tenuous to the point of being elusive, it is only because the force that fills it is incomprehensible to us, and because our powerless senses, at this height, confuse the notions of being and time, freed from the imperfections of action.

The third term (li) and the fourth term (tsheng) of the tetragram, *'good'* and *'perfection'*, appear immediately connected. The third term expresses the change that form brings to beings; the fourth term expresses the benefit that must result from this change, if those who have received it each follow their own path: 'The way of authority,' says Tsouhi, 'is progressive change and transformation

; transformation is the perfect fulfilment (or the end) of change."

Before the third term, creation, in its volitional state, was identified with Being (creative will, active Perfection, Chien) and did not emerge from it; after the third term, it is still Being (Chien), but flowing within the stream of forms, and consequently, within the various beings we know. The benefit resulting from the emergence of forms, in accordance with the will of Heaven, is the fourth term.

"The work of creation," says Tsouhi, "is the very purpose of life." Life is not, in fact, an inevitable corollary but merely a variety, an accident of creation[6] . The act of creation does not, at all—or at least not essentially—involve the act of giving life; for because of active Perfection (Being in itself), there is no room for an analogous and parallel existence; *to give life* is a crude translation of *creating form*. One of the forms into which Being and beings flow may be life, as we earthlings understand it. But it is only one of the innumerable forms of creation (modifications). Thus creation does not comprise only all living beings: it also comprises all non-living things, that is to say, all forms. And let us note, in passing, that consciousness is by no means inherent in life.

Form is the direct means of change; transformation is the ultimate goal, that is to say, reintegration beyond forms (unity). It is by following this path and reaching its culmination that the will of heaven is fulfilled, and that the fourth term of the tetragram is realised.

The sage Shipingweng expressed, with a precision rare in the Far East, the entire work contained within the tetragram. 'Modification,' he said, 'is the mechanism that produces all beings; transformation is the mechanism into which all beings are absorbed.' This is the whole of Eastern genesis. There is no creation (in the mechanical and material sense usually attached to this expression); but there is the production of beings through the modification of Being, and there is nothing more; a modification constitutes the present moment, of which we see an infinitesimal fragment in earthly life; transformation signifies the return of beings, in a state of modification, to the unmodified Being, and it is the mechanism that governs this reabsorption. The Way of Heaven thus encompasses both the emanation into forms and the return out of forms.

From a human perspective, death is thus one of the moments of creation, though it cannot be said whether it is the threshold of transformation, or merely a modification which, in the normal course of activity, immediately follows the modification of life.

From the perspective of 'walking' in accordance with the will of heaven, Shipingwen's text establishes the principle of involution and evolution—perhaps not in the sense of descent and ascent, nor even explicitly in the sense of disintegration and reintegration, but in the sense of 'a journey outwards and

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[6] See the Western intuitives: 'And the evil called life is at last vanquished.' (E. Poe)

return inwards' through the current of forms, whose source and mouth merge (and this has no mathematical image of a circumference).

Now, modification and transformation encompass, from the moment of the emanation of the will of heaven (*the initial cause*), all the phenomena, material or immaterial, of creation: the first modification is the beginning of phenomena; the completion of the transformation, through the termination of the final modification, is the goal, the end of creation. All this is contained in the third term of the tetragram; and the normal sequence of modifications and transformations ($3^{rd}$term), in accordance with the initial cause and following *Liberty*, produces *perfection* ($4^{th}$term), as foreseen in the work of Heaven.

The fourth term is therefore the immediate, and as it were imminent, emanation of the unimpeded third term; that is to say, on the human plane, man need only develop along his path for happiness to ensue. This is why it is said that the last two terms of the formula are intimately linked to one another and must be studied together.

The consequence of Shipingwen's words is clear and intentional; indeed, it is explicitly stated in the texts of other commentators; after the transformation has been perfectly accomplished, and the modifications have been absorbed, there is a return to the beginning of the formula, that is to say, before the initial cause. Now, since all beings return to Active Perfection (khièn) and this is essentially the Activity of Heaven, the *Way* that has led through the terms of the formula still exists and will exist eternally. There is therefore a departure into a new cycle, which changes and transforms as we have seen for any cycle taken at random; but nowhere is it stated that the same beings must flow into the same part of the stream of forms. Translated to the human plane, this truth is expressed as follows: that forms endure, modified and transformed by the same mechanism, but that formal beings cannot rely on their past or present forms to predict their future forms: or that creation does not change, but that the formal parts, which reveal it to us, are subject to exchanges, or if you will, to progressions; and that *the essence* subsists as one, under various appearances, in the eternal succession of cycles, just as it was one before the *initial cause* opened the gates of the *Way* to the forms of the Universe.

Let us take the formula further mathematically, and imagine the transformation as a final cycle through which the four terms of the Tetragrammaton would pass, without ever leaving the bosom of *Perfection*. And thus we touch upon the complete truth regarding the ultimate destinies of the Universe and of Humanity, the supreme and triumphant application of the Primordial Tradition.

# CHAPTER VI

# THE LAWS OF EVOLUTION

Certain considerations in the preceding pages may already have suggested the direction in which this problem of the destinies of the Universe—and, within that, the destiny of our present humanity (the total destiny of that which, in its current form, bears the name of humanity)—should be resolved; a problem which is not among the most significant, but which, from our personal point of view, is the most interesting.

The metaphysical activity of Perfection (Khièn) extends to all things; our destinies flow from it as a direct consequence. Just as closely as the forms of the Universe or such other concepts or entities, our fate is governed by the *universal Way*, and by the symbolic ascent of the Dragons, from whose influence nothing escapes.

But let us now consider in general terms how we are to understand the destinies of the Universe, and how the concern for our earthly existence, for what precedes it and what immediately follows it, is but a particular concern, and such a specialisation of the matter that neither the idea nor the very term of this existence deserves to feature, nor will it actually feature, in the generalised exposition.

This is merely a detailed application which we shall study separately, since we are currently dependent on human stasis; but this is only a very minor aspect of the problem, which does not merit special elaboration, and which owes its inclusion here solely to the satisfaction we feel obliged to give to the natural curiosity of the human being regarding the immediate end of its present condition, and its transition to the next condition, beyond and above this human state.

Let us therefore reiterate here with greater emphasis what was only briefly outlined above: The act of creation does not expressly and inevitably entail the act of giving life (earthly, or analogous to the life we see on this earth). To give life is one of the translations of: ‘to flow within the stream of forms’: one of the forms into which beings flow may well be life as we, earthlings, understand it, but it is only one of the innumerable facets of our modifications; life is therefore not an indispensable corollary, but merely an *accident* of creation.

We must therefore take great care, in all that follows, to set aside the impressions and feelings arising from our present state of consciousness, and to relate our reasoning to the succession of forms within general existence, and not to particular existence in a single form. Only in this way will we fully understand the value of the Chinese Magi’s system, and grasp their solution in all its synthetic breadth.

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As we have seen: Perfection is active; its activity is endless, free (i.e. consequent upon its principle of causality) and good (i.e. regular and harmonious). Thus all destinies (past, present and future, of course, for here the word 'destiny' does not imply the notion of the future), all the destinies of the Universe are composed of activity, perpetuity, cause and harmony.

Humanity is one of the forms of the current in which beings flow (activity) whilst differentiating themselves from the Being, formally and not essentially. It is therefore one of the aspects of passive Perfection, and one of the modifications through which the Universe tends towards transformation, i.e. towards the mechanism of reintegration. Thus Perfection is the generator of Humanity (causality), just as the one matter – and consequently eternal and formless – is the generator of divisible, diverse and temporary matter. These are objective modes of subjectivity.

Humanity, considered even before its birth and also after its earthly death, is, strictly speaking in metaphysics, one of the Forms of the Universe (and earthly humanity is one of the modifications of this form). In the same way and just as scrupulously as all the others, and without the possibility of the slightest special treatment, this form emerges from Perfection through the Principle of efficient causality, passes through all modifications, and attains transformation, through which it returns to Perfection. No form escapes this general law, and therein lies *Harmony*; it is the harmony of the Way, of the Tao, of which we find here the first and perfect definition, and which we shall study in depth in the philosophical system of Laozi[1] .

Let us clarify, in plain language, this inescapable fact: Humanity comes from the Infinite; Humanity returns to the Infinite. We must even say that it never leaves it, and that all changes occur within the Infinite: not only the law of Harmony, but common sense dictates it so. For if a fragment of Humanity did not follow the other fragments of this form through all its changes and in the final, shared transformation of the entire Universe, that fragment could only emerge from the Infinite, exist outside the Infinite, and be situated alongside the Infinite. – Now, whilst one may sometimes numerically depart from mathematical Infinity, one cannot, in essence, depart from metaphysical Infinity, on pain of destroying the very notion and idea of that Infinity. This proof by contradiction may not entirely satisfy the discerning mind; it remains nonetheless irrefutable.

We are all like points on the surface of a cylinder, which may appear to belong to a line or a plane tangent to that surface, but which are nonetheless an integral part, not only of the surface, but of the volume of the cylinder as functions of that volume.

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[1] It is worth noting at this point that Laozi's doctrine stems directly from the I Ching and the Primordial Tradition.

All of us, the visible and invisible forms of the Universe, emanate from the Infinite: we cannot escape it; we are forever bound to it by our very essence; and we shall remain, after our forms have passed away, within this Infinite, of which we never cease to be elusive, infinitesimal, yet absolutely essential molecules.

This doctrine holds us fast like an axiom, and no revelation can claim to impose a contrary belief; nor can any sophistry, drawn from the weight of consequences, prevail against this truth, so dazzling that its very demonstration is, so to speak, intangible.

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I do not wish to engage in debate here; and yet one point must be clarified, not so much to attempt the futile effort of convincing opponents determined to remain so, as to resolve the hesitation of certain consciences. The doctrine we have just set out is not a pantheistic doctrine. This is the objection that Western science, conscience and religions raise, with facile eloquence, against the sacred traditions of India; the adherents of this tradition undoubtedly have no difficulty in defending themselves against this passionate and groundless attack. But as for us, we shall not for a moment allow ourselves to be deterred by this accusation of crude idealism, and we wish to immediately forestall and refute it.

We are not pantheists; we have no right to declare that we are Gods, any more than the stray arm of the Venus de Milo has the right to declare that it is the Venus de Milo. The Universe consists not only of its Essence; matter consists not only of its substratum; there is also nature and quality; and together with the substratum, these constitute the aspects of the metaphysical triad, which is as real as the existences of the earthly Trinity, or as the hypostases of the heavenly Trinity. – We shall return to this in detail when we come to psychology. For now, let us simply note that the metaphysical triad is by no means the heavenly Trinity, much less the Divine Unity, and that to say one will return to the bosom of God is not the same as saying one is God; otherwise, all Christians would be the crudest of pantheists. In the metaphysical triad, only the Essence possesses Perfection; but nature and quality depend on the flow of modifications; like them, they are temporary and protean, and can therefore in no way belong to the Infinite; and beings, of whom they are contingent but objectively indispensable conditions and functions, cannot be confused with the Infinite.

Let us therefore speak for a moment in Western terms; for here they fit the Eastern doctrine perfectly, and become, so to speak, a universal language: what distinguishes us from God is not essence, for we are of divine essence (and Christianity itself acknowledges and advocates this origin); it is nature and quality, the second and third terms of the metaphysical triad. This nature and this quality are precisely the prerogative of beings flowing in the stream of forms; it is these terms which, in the succession of modifications, define the form. One might say that, in our eyes, they are themselves *the form*. But what, then, is

, what is form? Form, geometrically speaking (and philosophically too), is the outline: it is *the appearance of the Limit*.

The Limit, like form, is what determines us, defines us, *divides us*. This divisibility to Infinity, which is the flow into forms, is what separates us from God. *Between God and us lies the Limit*, that is to say, the very defining feature of all creation. And between God and us, there is nothing but the *Limit*, since, if it is removed, all creation vanishes, and only Universal Unity remains.

Let us reflect deeply on this theorem; for it contains the entire explanation of the Universe, if we care to remember that the *Limit*, or the Forms, or the *Flow of Forms* (for we are all speaking the same language here) does not merely comprise, as children imagine, outlines or contours, but also the functions of weight, volume, density, and all the concepts and perceptions that constitute the superficial and apparent differentiations of the molecules of Matter.

We have deliberately employed here a truly rudimentary terminology; but we have done so in order to make more striking that which is the most essential of the truths intelligible to man.

This demonstration will thus immediately resonate with those who seek classifications, genera and species in everything, and who believe that scientists must absolutely be organised by chapters and according to formulas. We are not pantheists; even less are we
'naturalists'. But standing at an equal distance from pure mystics, who find evidence only in mystery, and from materialists, who find evidence only in the control of the five human senses, we are *positive idealists*.

We know that our reason, that our understanding, acknowledge their own imperfections; and yet, in the control they exercise over the perceptions and sensations afforded to us by our human form, we recognise that we must not accept, as materialists do, what the examination of our senses declares to be truths or evident truths; we are even compelled to declare that these contingent truths and evidences cannot truly be truths and evidences, for the very reason that they appear as such to limited instruments and inadequate recorders.

However, just as we cannot rely *a priori* and entirely on the experiences of our senses, neither can we place our complete trust in the assertions of our reason. For the primary effect of our reasoning is to demonstrate to us that our reason is limited and not yet fully developed. And it is limited precisely because it operates upon a being that is in a state of flux, within the flow of forms—that is to say, within limits. We must not rebel against what materialists call the unintelligible, and reject as such. There are no *unintelligible* things; there are only things that *are currently incomprehensible*. And since we know we are not perfect, that we are at an indeterminate but not superior stage of evolution, we know that we cannot be universally comprehensive. Our understanding is at the same cyclical level as the other parts of the human composite; and, consequently, far from rejecting

the incomprehensible, we must declare that, in the present state of our stasis, an apparent incomprehensibility is philosophically necessary, and that the presence of this relative incomprehensibility is a criterion – and the best one – by which we may recognise that we are moving towards the truth. – This is how we are not materialists, and how, on the contrary, we are essentially idealists.

But we do not have blind faith in these abstruse notions. And upon these abstractions, mysterious as they are at present, we refuse to construct any psychological system, any moral rule, any sentimental religion. This unknown fills us not with hope or discouragement, but only with curiosity and ardour. We feel—what am I saying? we know that there is nothing to fear in this unknown, because its mystery lies not in itself, but solely in our own contingency; and that, consequently, it is a relative mystery, destined to be unravelled by us on the day when the organ (which is today our physical eye) is sublimated to the point of rising to the height of its vision. – Our whole mind must strive towards
'To bridge the gap', that is to say, to see the boundary disappear. We do not bow our knees before the mystery; we raise our understanding up to it. On that day we shall have become the mystery itself; and even now we can only laugh at the terrors and threats that are decreed in its name. – And yet, we maintain that this audacity is the best means of attaining knowledge, and that, even within Christian doctrine (which they would have us believe is the doctrine of kneeling), *heaven belongs only to the violent*. Attempting to penetrate the mystery is the only way our intellects can honour it. He does not respect his father who turns his back on him, in fear of his face and his gaze. To build nothing upon the mystery, but to embrace it in order to understand it, knowing that our efforts—incapable of success in our present state—are counted towards us through our successive modifications for the final transformation: such is our rule.

This is why we are not mystics, but resolutely positive. And this method is in no way opposed to our idealist doctrine. On the contrary, it makes it more firmly rooted in our minds. And we believe that, just as happens every day in the boundless progress of science (from Volta's frog to solar electric waves), the boundless progress of Humanity – which will change its name, nature and quality, and retain only its Essence, through all the modifications towards which it tends – will bring it to the level of all the unknowns, whose final modification is to become axioms.

Thus the Universe passes, until its final transformation, through all the modifications traversed by the current of forms. Let us determine the laws of this current. They conform to the principles of activity, harmony and goodness through which Perfection manifests itself in Wenwang's tetragrammatic formula. And we must apply these principles to the laws of the current of forms in order to specify its data and elements, with a precision that belongs more to mathematics than to philosophy.

Beings move, they evolve; such is the corollary of the initial principle, causality, which is the sole manifestation of Perfection, that is to say, the *will of Heaven*.

Can we conceive of them coming to a halt? No, for to cause such a halt, we would have to suppose a will of Heaven contrary to that which keeps them in motion, and it is utterly impossible for Heaven to manifest two principles contrary to one another. And thus, from the moment that motion exists (and this is something that, even objectively, cannot be denied), motion will always exist, and it can be defined as: the *Eternal Manifestation of Perfection*. Thus the principle of causality is satisfied. But so that there may be no possibility of error, even for a single moment, in people's minds, let us say that one must not confuse Eternal Movement with a
'eternal creation' or an 'eternal passage through the stream of forms'. We shall determine elsewhere what the Eternal Movement and the Eternal Action are, but it would be truly childish to claim to give a *direction* to the *Totality* of movement, or a *motive* to the *Totality* of actions. And so one can already understand, even before the definition, the ultimate goal to which the principle of causality leads.

How does the law of activity cause beings to evolve? The continuity of evolution satisfies only causality; *activity* requires an *action*; an action, whatever it may be, satisfies activity: but does the repetition of an action, whatever it may be, truly constitute an action? We are compelled to answer in the negative; for, from the point of view of the action itself, its repetition constitutes *monotony*; and from the point of view of the motors of the action, we see that the same action is generated by the same motors, acting under the same impulse, with the same force; the *continuity* of an action is therefore not activity; it is, on the contrary, after the setting in motion, *the immobility* of the driving principle. Consequently, the principle of activity is satisfied, not by a single action, not by the same action repeated twice or indefinitely, but rather by an indefinite series of actions, which are due to different driving forces, and which, consequently, cannot be absolutely identical. Thus, in the name of the principle of activity, *one does not pass twice through the same stream of forms*. And we are absolutely forbidden to believe in metempsychosis, at least in the crude and gross metempsychosis that has been extracted with great difficulty from Buddhist and Pythagorean doctrines, and which, in reality, is not to be found there[2] .

But, on the contrary, having exhausted a form, and all the circumstances of a modification, we inevitably move on to another modification, with the logical certainty that we shall never return to the one we have just left.

How can *continuous* and *varied* movement be reconciled with the law of harmony, which is the third term of Wenwang's tetragrammatic formula? (It should be noted in passing that the law of harmony can only be fulfilled through varied actions, for there is no harmony in repetition: harmonic relationships, like algebraic or geometric ones, can only be established between quantities

[2] The law of rebirths is quite different. But we wish to state right now that it is real and logical, with all the happy consequences that humanity expects from it, both from the point of view of its destiny and from the point of view of its personality.

(different). Harmony is satisfied by the proportions (in the mathematical sense) of the variations; that is to say, any given form is invariably distinct from the one that precedes it and the one that follows it, and all modifications are invariably distinct from one another. Thus, the series of modifications can mathematically be expressed as a progression (arithmetic or geometric), a progression tending towards a 'metaphysical locus' which one cannot objectively conceive of reaching. Thus the law of harmony truly comes to light.

It has another consequence, which immediately affects beings undergoing change: this is the invariability of the meaning and sequence of the changes through which all beings pass. For just as activity precludes passing through the same form twice, harmony precludes the possibility of not passing through all forms, and thus precludes there being multiple currents of forms. In this logical necessity, we humans now find a pledge of the brotherhood of our spirits and the parallelism of our efforts[3] . Union is thereby unbreakable, whether they retain or lose the memory of it, between those who, in the course of a modification, united their tendencies; they will find themselves analogously side by side in the modifications yet to come.

Finally, the fourth law holds that *continuous, varied and harmonious* movement is beneficial, and leads the Universe to Perfection. The unyielding logic of the Chinese sages leads us here to a clearer understanding of our destinies. Willed by Perfection, determined by the precise consequences of that will, Evolution can only be good, and can only produce an excellent result for the beings who are its substance. There is no – let us state this for the record – reintegration outside of Perfection. There is no place, neither physical, nor geometric, nor metaphysical, outside of Perfection. There is therefore nothing other than the blissful final reintegration. Such is the necessity of the fourth law. But, if we combine its effects with those of the third law, we immediately realise that there is no essential difference in the fate of beings undergoing change, that there is no room for downfalls, whatever they may be, which would contravene the law of good if they were general, and which would contravene the law of harmony if they were partial and temporary. The passage of beings through the modifications of the Universe is therefore a steady, continuous, harmonious and beneficial ascent, in which Perfection—of which we are infinitesimal particles and continuous emanations—could not prevent us from participating.

There, then, are the driving forces of Universal Evolution, outlined very briefly (for the Chinese have written volumes on the subject, and Western philosophers would no doubt do the same). They are so characteristic, so inevitable, so precise that, on the one hand, it is impossible for a sincere human intellect to escape them, and, on the other hand, using the best of methods, it will be as easy for us to reduce the Destinies of the Universe to a geometric design as it was for us

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[3] We shall return to this at length in the 'Conditions of the Individual'.

reduce into six lines, without diminishing it, this that the West calls
'the incommunicable Eternal' [4] .

The principle of causality manifests itself through motion; in mechanics, all motion is essentially represented by a line; since the principle of activity manifests itself through indefinite diversity, this line cannot be a circle, nor a broken line: it can only be a line composed of hyperbolic or parabolic segments, such as those comets appear to trace in space, whose branches diverge to infinity; this hypothesis naturally presupposes that we are considering only a single plane of space: but the principle of harmony (which here fulfils the *cyclical* idea, and in every respect symbolises the idea of *return* and the principle of reintegration), the principle of harmony requires that modifications follow one another at equal intervals and be equally distant from one another: thus any possibility of a flat line must be ruled out, since there are *ratios of distance* between its various parts: the line of universal motion is therefore inscribed on a *curved surface*; the ratios of distance between the elements of this line are in arithmetic progression to satisfy the law of harmony. Finally, since the law of the good requires that modifications proceed in a continual ascent, the elements of the figure inevitably and invariably *superimpose* one upon the other.

The requirements of figuration may thus be summarised as follows: a line (principle of causality): indefinite and never passing through the same points twice (principle of activity): determining curves, intersections of left-handed surfaces, coiling one above the other (principle of the good): and in which all the points of one element are equidistant from the corresponding points of the superior and inferior elements (principle of harmony).

There is no other surface that satisfies these necessary conditions other than the cylindrical helix; that is to say, the line of universal motion will be precisely the intersection of the helix (left-hand surface) with the lateral surface of the cylinder representing cyclical Evolution, along which all beings move. Of course, the cylinder of Evolution is representative only insofar as our eye is compelled to intersect the indefinite left-hand surface in order to obtain the helix: but the surface along which the helix winds has no physical or geometric location: it may at will be extended to infinity, or be assumed to be reduced to the height of the cylinder alone; so that the base radius of the cylinder is irrelevant, and that, in reality, it is equal to the zero of the metaphysics of numbers.

The only element of the helix that remains to be determined is therefore its pitch, that is to say, the distance, along the height of the cylinder, between two corresponding points on its curve (the curve between these two points constitutes one of the revolutions of the helix, and all revolutions are equal to one another); this pitch of the helix is constant (principle of harmony), and it is the only given that we cannot

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[4] It will be easy for us to demonstrate later on how the free will of *the human race* is perfectly compatible with the general laws set out above.

determine mathematically, because we are in the midst of a revolution, and have lost the memory of the passage through previous revolutions.

Let us construct this very simple diagram: it should satisfy us entirely. From any point on the helix, draw a line parallel to the height of the cylinder on the lateral surface of the cylinder. We determine a moment in Evolution, and a complete transformation.

The Universe (all beings) is, by the principle of causality, set in motion and propelled along the helix inscribed on the sides of the cylinder (a cylinder, let us repeat, that is hypothetical, and representing the manifestation of the will of heaven, supposing for a moment that it were suspended, a will which includes all the movements arising from it). Let us seize it at the point given above, and suppose this point to be the beginning of a change. At the moment the Universe enters this change, if it were left to its own devices, it would follow a trajectory, represented precisely by the tangent to the helix at the given point. But it is drawn by the will of heaven (principle of activity) and compelled towards heaven (principle of the good): it therefore traces the indicated helix, and the pitch of the helix is precisely the mathematical measure of the '*attractive force of the Divinity*'. There is no direct means of assessing this measure; we would only know it by analogy (principle of harmony), if the Universe, in its present state, remembered its past state, and could thus judge the metaphysical quantity acquired, and, consequently, could measure the ascending force. It is not said that this is impossible, for it is easily comprehensible; but it is not within the faculties of present-day humanity[5] .

Throughout the Universe's course along the helical revolution that represents its present state, the elements governing it are analogous (harmony) yet not identical (activity) to those that governed it in previous states, just as they will be to those that will govern it in future states. The study of the present modification of the Universe can therefore, if properly undertaken, provide, by analogy, valuable data on the destinies (past and future) of all beings. This is a useful endeavour for those who are able to devote themselves to it.

Having reached the end of the revolution under consideration in the helix, the Universe tends towards the end of its modification and passes into a subsequent modification, which is superior, as dictated by the principle of the good. But the helix is, everywhere and at every point, regular; between the end of one modification and the beginning of the next, there is therefore neither jolt nor sudden change: the transition from one modification to another occurs as logically and as simply as the transition from one state to another within the same modification: the universe always moves normally and with a steady motion (law of harmony). The transition is *imperceptible*; there is nothing *surprising* or *painful* about it.

The Universe, therefore, passes into the next modification, where it successively occupies analogous positions (harmony) on a higher left surface (good). And this movement continues thus throughout Evolution; will it

[5] It is thus clear that those who take the *circle* as the symbol of Evolution are simply overlooking the *primary cause.*

Eternal? That is to say, will changes always follow one another? And will the helix wind its revolutions endlessly around the cylinder without bases? This has been said, and it has been based on the principle that the will of Heaven, having brought about the movement, cannot stop it. But it is entirely false to conceive of the movement of the heavenly will as inherent in the passage from one place to another, that is to say, in a displacement, in whatever world one might consider this displacement. We shall see in the Book of Laozi, which explains the I Ching, that
'celestial movement' is quite compatible, on the metaphysical plane, with what we call, on the plane of changes, *rest*. And this is therefore not a serious objection.

When will the series of modifications be exhausted? The Universe traversing them will know, when it knows, not only the pitch of the helix, that is to say, the attractive force of the Divinity, but when it knows the distance, which, on the height of the ideal cylinder, separates it from Perfection.

But what does it matter that we cannot currently make this determination, if we know how we shall do so later, through the assessment of such elements, and through the acquisition of such faculties which are lacking in human existence?

Once again, may the logic of mathematics console us for our insufficient intelligence.

The figurative cylinder around which the evolutionary helix winds, in accordance with the very principle of activity, rises to infinity. Now, since parallel lines meet at infinity, the lateral surface and the height of the cylinder meet at infinity at a single point, and the boundary of the cylinder is a cone. It is this figure that mathematics presents to us when we consider the end of modifications, that is to say, the moment of Transformation, that is to say, the Idea of Reintegration. And mathematics here is absolute, and of striking precision. It is precisely towards a point at the height of the cylinder (which has become the apex of the cone) that all the elements of the lateral surface of the volume converge into a single point, and consequently the helix that develops there: the hypothetical extremity of the height of the cylinder is, as we have seen, the centre of attraction of the will of heaven; it is therefore *precisely* that, at infinity, *the evolved Universe merges with Perfection*. The Universe cannot, *even mathematically*, go elsewhere, nor escape Perfection through another current of forms. Reintegration into Perfection is the total and inevitable fate of all beings.

If we take the analogical symbol presented by the geometric figure a step further, we may claim that, after merging with Perfection, the Universe once again distinguishes itself from it. For a cone, even one generated by a cylinder extended to infinity, contains another conical surface, opposite the first at the apex; and thus the Universe would depart along a new conical helix, the branches of the surface diverging to infinity. Nothing stands in the way of this mathematical truth. But it cannot be symbolically transposed into metaphysics. For mathematical infinity presupposes Riemannian surfaces and transfinite numbers; and, even more simply, at every stage of algebraic discussions, one is led to conceive of a notion beyond infinity. This is the best proof that mathematical infinity is not infinity, but rather metaphysical indefiniteness: heavenly Perfection does not reside in the indefinite, it resides in

the Infinite: and whilst we may take the indefinite as an image of the infinite, we cannot apply the reasoning of the indefinite to the infinite. Symbolism descends but does not ascend.

Let us therefore confidently welcome the designs of *Heaven's will*, as yet unknown but logical and intelligible; and let us have no fear regarding the course and the end, inevitably happy, of the Destinies of the Universe.

# CHAPTER VII

# THE DESTINIES OF HUMANITY

If we refer back to the cylinder and the helix representing the destinies of the Universe, governed by the laws of Evolution, we shall observe that the particular destinies of Humanity are governed by the same laws, in an equally precise and immutable manner, and that one need only apply these laws logically and appropriately to the human condition to find the solution to the problems that trouble our species to a greater or lesser extent.

The human cycle is one of the elements of the helix; it is likely one of its turns; and human life can be defined as beginning and ending with the turn in question, that is to say, as bounded at its ends by the two intersections of the turn with the parallel line at the height of the cylinder drawn through any point on its lateral surface.

This corollary of our previous propositions immediately shows that the human cycle is an entirely normal cycle, that human change, among other changes, has nothing surprising or marvellous about it, and that there are therefore no particular solutions or transformations to be applied to it.

For, it must be strongly emphasised, there is nothing extraordinary about humanity, nor about the fate that awaits it; the only thing that could be extraordinary is if it were not as it is. It forms part, in its natural place, of the modifications of the Universe; it is one of the normal elements of Evolution. Nothing has been ‘created’ for man; nothing awaits man in particular; he came from whence all things came; he goes whither all things return; and the stage at which he finds himself is no more significant than the others.

We accord it greater importance because we happen to be in that situation at the moment; and this is quite reasonable, provided we simply regard it with greater curiosity. But we are merely indulging in naive vanity if this curiosity leads us to demand special treatment for man; we must convince ourselves – and this is difficult both for our pride and for those who seek to exploit it for their own gain – that man is not in an inferior position, that he is not in a privileged position, that he is simply as he ought to be; that he is a being neither particularly happy nor particularly unhappy, and that he deserves neither the laudatory exclamations nor the pitiful curses with which religious texts have in turn befuddled or stupefied him.

‘Man alone has a soul,’ exclaim certain sycophants, who, like all their kind, seek to profit from their flattery. This proposition is as manifestly false as one that would claim that man alone has a body.

And in reality, this proposition is as false in its general sense as it is in its claim. Man certainly possesses something unique to him, as we shall explain further on: it is the very characteristic of human stasis. But modified beings, who follow and precede us, possess in equal measure post-human and pre-human characteristics, and have no right to take pride in them, since it is the law of activity that has provided them with these, and they could not have failed to acquire them successively.

But the human characteristic, no more than any other, is composed of no element found only in man. It is a *compound* whose quantities are found only in man at certain coefficients, but whose consecutive elements are found in one or more adjacent stases; they do not belong *to man*; it is *their association* alone that makes the human being.

The mathematical diagram, moreover, shows us a perfectly regular and coordinated helix; no point is eccentric; all are regular and consistent with the generating elements of the figure; humanity is situated on one of these points, or rather on one of the spirals composed of these points. It is therefore entirely normal; it does not enjoy the *favour of the Divinity*, and we must consign to the ageing arsenal of our pride and our fears the praises and threats that were solemnly bestowed upon us in the name of this *privileged position*, which is nothing but a mad notion and entirely contrary to the principle of Evolution and to Perfection itself.

Let us move along the helix of Evolution to a point of intersection provided by the parallel line at the height of the cylinder on its lateral surface; this parallel line intersects all the revolutions of the helix; between two consecutive points of intersection lies the spiral of Humanity: the lower point of intersection is that of the beginning of the spiral, and of our present observation. This is the moment when Humanity is born[1] .

It comes into being, that is to say: it arises from the preceding modification, without jolt or jolt, rising along the gentle curve, through a continuous circular motion, due to the attractive force of Perfection. – The law of causality is *the origin* of this birth, and of the perpetuity of this birth, at least so long as there is a flow of Forms: for the human form may merge into the Universal: it will certainly merge into it; but it cannot perish in the negative sense that our objectivity attaches to this grammatical term; that is to say, it will end gently upon the expiry of its form and its replacement by another, but it will not come to an end, in the midst of its course, through a brutal cataclysm that would disrupt the uniform course of its destiny. Let us therefore, without further elaboration—which would be truly futile—leave the *end of the world* to the good King Robert, and the freezing of our globe to Mr Camille Flammarion: these hypotheses are gratuitous, and, even if one were to consider them materially and physiologically feasible, they would have no influence whatsoever on the human Form or on the Destinies of Humanity. The

[1] We speak *of Humanity* and not *of man* in particular. We are studying here *the collective man*. It is the free will of the species which, from the collective man, makes *individuals*.

The Earth, as a vehicle, could only perish when it had become useless. That is to say, humanity would not perish with the planet, but the planet would perish when it no longer served as a stage for Humanity. – And all this is nothing but superfluous and redundant contingencies.

The law of activity propels Humanity, from the moment of its birth, along the spiral of its unique evolution; Humanity never remains stationary at any point on this spiral, nor does it ever pass through the same point twice. Does this mean that the human cycle consists solely of earthly life, and that we must never return to the planet after death? How fortunate would be the person who could provide a definitive answer, in whatever sense, to this question. Certainly we shall never pass through human existence again, as we experience it today, for the Law of Activity, the Law of Harmony and the Law of Good would thereby be violated all at once. But are there only 'human compounds' on Earth? And is Earth the only place where 'human compounds' can undergo change? Let us attempt to answer such perplexing questions by analogy.

Of the three kingdoms we know on our globe, the animal kingdom sees and senses the plant kingdom and the mineral kingdom; the plant kingdom senses but does not see; the mineral kingdom neither senses nor sees[2] . This is the sum total of what falls within the scope of the senses. But we sense, without seeing, a matter other than that which is classified within these three kingdoms. Everything that is electricity, psyche, wandering forces—this is matter that does not fall within our sensory control, and in relation to which humanity is, as the plant is in relation to humanity. It is possible to take the analogy further. The mineral feels nothing of the fact that we shape it and make use of it: we may well be the unwitting instruments of terrestrial beings, who possess none of our five senses, of whom we are unaware, and who make use of our mind without our mind knowing it, just as our will makes use of the mineral[3] . We govern animals, plants and metals: why, if not through the effect of the most ridiculous pride, do we wish to be governed by no one, and for there to be no form of the Universe between God and us? This is entirely illogical, and even begins to contradict the recent discoveries of mental and psychic sciences. Are these superior beings, these indisputable yet unknown entities, these entirely normal forms of the Universe, or are they not, sublimated Humanities? Who, then, will dare to insist that this is so? But who will dare to say that it is impossible?

And furthermore, is the human cycle inevitably confined to the role we see it playing on this earth? Is it essential, for a man to remain part of humanity, that he tread the ground with his feet, that he reap the wheat with his hands, that he tear flesh with his teeth? No one would claim that the essence of Humanity lies in *form*, that is to say, to put it in more physical terms –

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[2] At least, that is the current state of experimental science.

[3] Suggestion gives humans power over other humans who lose their will to the will of their transient masters; it would therefore be foolish to claim that our hypothesis is based not on experimental data as well as on analogy.

in the possession and use of the five senses, and in the habitat of our present planet. Humanity may develop beyond the planet, with an appearance and means suited to the formal conditions of existence that will be reserved for it elsewhere. This, too, is perfectly analogous and plausible.

Thus, for humanity, to be on this earth with other organic elements, with another *form of life* – or to undergo another transformation with analogous but perfected organs: these are two equally acceptable variations of the law of rebirth. And such is the Buddhist and Pythagorean metempsychosis, which all of antiquity accepts, and which we accept along with it, as a perfectly logical and demonstrated corollary of the Laws of Evolution. This law of Rebirth affects Humanity throughout the entire human cycle; one of its applications lies within the terrestrial human species; and that is why, just now, we distinguished between collective Man and the individual human being.

Humanity is a coil of the helix; the present human species is one of the points on the coil[4]. Let us always take care not to make such a confusion, not to take the part for the whole, and consequently not to fall into the most nebulous reveries or the crudest form of transformationism. Earthly human life is one of the points in the human cycle; it is one of the forms of Humanity; and Humanity, by the law of Rebirth, passes through the present human stage without remaining there, and without returning to it. But whilst the human species is lost to the individual after death, Humanity remains with the collective Man. And we shall see later how the human aggregate behaves in these various situations. And we shall also see that, both before and after the human cycle, there remains, of that which constitutes the characteristic of Humanity, an immanent and eternal constituent element.

The law of harmony propels Humanity along its cycle with a general and uniform movement. The movement is general, in that none of the parts constituting Humanity can escape it by chance, or voluntarily withdraw from it: it is uniform, in that the initial cause (the movement resulting from the manifestation of Heaven's will) acts upon all of Humanity in a manner that is always consistent with itself, and that Humanity therefore moves along its spiral without jolts or pauses. This law of harmony has a threefold consequence; in the fate of Humanity, there is no chance; there is no essential differentiation; there are no surprises nor exceptions.

There is no chance: chance is in fact produced by the concurrence of the element's unconsciousness with the absence of its initial driving force. We readily admit the element's unconsciousness, insofar as it is powerlessness in the course of a change, and of powerless non-intellect, if one considers the series of changes. But how can we accept the absence of the driving force, that is to say, the neglect whereby the Will of Heaven would leave even the smallest of the particles that the principle of causality has set in motion—that is to say, in objective existence? This

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[4] And it is this, then, that can be symbolised by the *circle of life*, characterised by the Yin Yang, which we shall examine further on.

is quite impossible; for if the particular element in question were left to chance outside the manifested Universe, one would have to deny the infinity of the Will of Heaven; and if the element were left to chance *within* the manifested Universe, one would have to deny the omniscient Perfection of that Will. That is to say, this Will of Heaven would not exist. *Chance* and *Heaven* are contradictory and mutually exclusive. And since the Universe is Heaven manifested, we must deny either chance or the Universe, even in the most concrete testimony of our senses. We are therefore led to this true proposition: *Chance does not exist*. And we are pleased to note that this proposition has long been inscribed at the threshold of high, purely Western science, and as an epigraph to the works of the masters who deal with it. In Christianity, and in all the religious and philosophical systems that emanate from it, or from which it emanates, this active aspect of the principle of harmony is called *Providence*, a word whose very root meaning constitutes the negation of chance.

There is no distinction, within Humanity, between the destinies of the various elements that compose it. The elements, which, at a given point, undergo a change simultaneously – harmoniously – emerge together from that change, and enter another together. Furthermore, all elements undergo all changes in the same order. Finally, just as their origin is the same, so too is their end. This is precisely what the law of Harmony requires; and it is impossible for this law to be violated in any respect. We shall see, in the course of these studies, when we examine the texts of the Kan-Yng or the Sanctions, how the crude dogma of eternal rewards and punishments is transformed when those who teach it have no money or influence to gain from the terrors it instils in believers. We must state from the outset that the equally unalterable Principle of Justice is always and everywhere fully satisfied. But it is the very nature of the attributes of heaven to conform to one another, and to interfere with one another in no way, even in their most extreme consequences; the principle of Justice is perfectly compatible with the law of Harmony, of which it is a metaphysical manifestation; and Harmony, like its corollary Justice, requires that the final fate of Humanity and the Universe be a common and single fate.

Let us note in passing that, by the application of Harmony, no more than by the application of Activity, is it permissible to accept the crude metempsychosis of Pythagoras's mediocre successors. Elements cannot remain in a state of change – whether retaining or altering their forms – whilst other elements, having entered this state of change at the same time as them, pass through it and leave it; some cannot advance whilst others regress, under the pretext of sanctions; for, once and for all, sanctions attached to temporary acts are necessarily objective, and cannot apply to consequential laws of subjectivity. All beings follow, in the flow of forms, a harmonious and regular movement; and it is the law of *the good* alone that determines the direction of this movement.

Finally, there is no jolt, no jolt, nor any unexpected event in this movement; that is to say, the progression is *methodical*. Harmony affects all beings in their passivity, and regulates their manifestation in forms. There is therefore no unforeseen creation; there is no *spontaneous generation*; all beings existed at the same time, and the first day on which we observed their existence is not

the day of their birth; this claim is yet another burst of pride from human minds served by an imperfect intelligence and by sensory organs that are, in reality, very mediocre; it is no more tenable than the opinion of an astronomer (I believe, for the sake of astronomy's honour, that such an astronomer does not and will not exist) who would declare that a star has just been created on the day he first glimpses it through his telescope, whereas, in reality, that star was so far from our globe that the light it emitted has only just reached us. It would be ridiculous to deny to the principles of metaphysics and the manifestations of the subjective what we grant to the laws of a contingent science. There is therefore no spontaneous generation. But the regularity of the production of forms demands more; it demands the regular transmission of form, and it demands it down to the smallest details. Thus the human *form* will always be the human *form*; and it is no more possible for a man to produce an ox than for an ox to produce a man, or for a plant to produce a piece of metal. This statement seems ridiculous; it will seem far less so when one realises that it asserts the impossibility that, through whatever refinements or stages one might imagine, a monkey could produce a man, and that, thereby, that bizarre Littrian theory—which has been inappropriately labelled 'Darwinism'—is irrevocably condemned. The last defenders of these propositions, which cannot be demonstrated, either physically or metaphysically, would never admit it possible for a black couple to produce a white child, yet find it plausible that a pair of orangutans, deep in the woods and shrouded in impenetrable mystery, might one day have produced a human being.

Of course, we admit that, just as there is, so to speak, no appreciable boundary between the most animal-like of plants and the most plant-like of animals, so too, between the human form and the other animal forms closest to it, there are as many forms as one might wish, and that they are, in stages and arranged in orders, as similar as possible to their neighbours. Between the most human-like ape and the most ape-like man, we may admit a thousand forms, if we wish, of anthropoids (although no absolutely convincing traces of them have ever been found, either in geology or in zoology); and thus, to the great satisfaction of certain scholars, who are very proud of themselves and very modest regarding their ancestors, the gap between man and ape will be bridged. This is true as regards the similarity of appearances; but the differentiation between the ranks, however indefinite or infinitesimal, remains just as strict; anthropoids will produce anthropoids; apes, apes; and men, men; and so it will be, as long as the stream of forms flows through the Universe.

Finally, this Humanity, which we now know to be active and dynamic, and which, following its course, is destined for a general and shared fate—the law of goodness designates this fate for it, and defines both the direction and the end of its activity. This end is excellent, for the supreme and sole purpose of Heaven's will is essentially and invincibly good. There is no eternal terror or suffering; let us prove this, in the simplest and most childlike terms.

If suffering were to exist eternally outside God, God would not contain all things; He would not be infinite; He would not be God. If suffering were to exist eternally within God, God would not be infinitely good; He

would not be God. Eternal suffering therefore exists neither within God nor outside God. That is to say, it does not exist, and cannot exist. The most eloquent threats, the most self-serving invectives will not escape this simple dilemma, within which all reason is confined.

Moreover, it is expressly the will of Heaven that sends beings forth into the stream of forms; without this Eternal Will, neither movement nor Form, nor the slightest part of 'creation' would exist; how can we suppose that this Will, which is exercised at birth and throughout all the changes of beings, would cease to be exercised at the moment of the final transformation? And would allow them to perish or fall? And how can we suppose that this will, exercising itself eternally, would lead the beings born of it, and by it alone, to an end of suffering and misfortune? How can we suppose that it does not guide them? How can one suppose that it guides them anywhere other than to itself, that is to say, to an end identical to the beginning? These are claims devoid of logic, justice, and goodness; they are utterly revolting, and their human origin—that is to say, their mediocrity and particularism—is plain to see. Only a narrow-minded being can conceive of a solution contrary to the good, that is to say, a negative one. – And because a solution is negative and narrow-minded, it cannot escape the contingency from which it was born, and it is inapplicable to problems of a subjective nature.

Here, then, are the destinies of Humanity, perfectly guided by the four inescapable laws that presided over the birth of the Universe and govern its course. – But what becomes of the freedom of things in the face of this inevitability? We shall explain this in detail when we come to the conditions of the individual. Human freedom exists: and it exists under conditions that satisfy subjective justice and which sufficiently engage our personal responsibilities, from the point of view of the sanction to be expected.

But having stated this, and as it is to be developed elsewhere, *the freedom of beings does not exist* in the sense of fragments cast into the current by the will of Heaven, to be gathered up by that same will. Let us not forget to which world the series of which we speak belongs, and that it is on the metaphysical—that is to say, divine—plane that our reasoning stands. We are here in the presence of the Divine Will. No will exists unless it emanates from this will; therefore, no will can equal it: for if a will were equal to the Divine, it would be the Divine, and not its emanation.

Any will that is equal to the Divine is identical to it; therefore, no will can, *on equal terms*, stand in opposition to the Divine Will. – There is therefore no will that triumphs over the Divine; *there is therefore no freedom that can stand against the Activity of Heaven.* The designs of Heaven cannot be overturned, thwarted, or delayed: nothing can prevail against them; and all religious doctrines – even the doctrine of Rome, expressed in the worst Latin in the world (*et portæ inferi non prævalebunt*, etc.) – are here in agreement with metaphysics and natural logic. Total Freedom exists only in the Infinite, and acts only through the Infinite, and in the will of the Infinite. – A being swept along in the current of forms cannot be endowed with total freedom, otherwise it would immediately be God. And the universe is invincibly governed; and it marches invincibly towards its destinies. And just as man is not born

whenever he wishes and does not choose the moment of his death, so Humanity is born into a state of change and leaves it, under the conditions determined by the will of Heaven. And it arrives where the will of Heaven has, from all eternity, directed it.

Total Freedom is both the most dangerous and the most ridiculous gift that anyone has ever sought to bestow upon Humanity: dangerous, because it could thus stand in the way of happy destinies; ridiculous, because those who claimed to bestow it upon Humanity failed to realise that, by allowing Humanity to stand up to God, they were making Humanity God. – But this invention of human pride and greed cared little for such a contradiction coupled with such impiety. *Total Freedom*, which the human race accepted out of pride, led to *total responsibility*, to *Total Guilt*, and to *Eternal Punishment*, the only possible reparation for this total guilt. And the inventors of the theorem and its consequences had, at the same time, invented the notion that, as ministers of God on earth, they could, by means of prayers, money, benefits of all kinds, spare people from *Eternal Punishment*, remit *Total Guilt*, and direct *Total Responsibility*, and thus, through an ingenious kickback, had this *total freedom*—which they had bestowed as a free gift upon a willing Humanity—paid for.

We are well aware that we are here dismantling the most deeply held prejudice of the species, in that we are depriving it—with a danger it finds scarcely conceivable—of the natural protectors against that very danger; and because, were our views to prevail, we would deprive those protectors of the easy livelihood on which they thrive, and the easy influence by which they have reigned for centuries. We know that we are attacking a conviction deeply rooted in the consciousness instilled in us by our ancestors, our educators, and countless years: we are all the more acutely aware of the difficulty of this task because, within ourselves, and even after having irrevocably established our certainty, the leaven of ancient terrors still sometimes ferments, and the hereditary fear that besieged our childhood rises up. It is difficult to free one's mind and reason from the most intolerable shackles, when they are age-old and draw their authority from those who taught us and whom we loved. But in all truth, it is impossible for us to admit, even once, the victory of irrational sentiment over logic, and to believe that God consented to make Himself equal to man, precisely to the latter's misfortune, and that *the* 'Creator' took pleasure in declaring Himself powerless to make *His* 'creature' inevitably happy, in this 'eternity' which He gave her and which she did not ask of Him[5] .

Certainly, we do not deny this: on the relative plane and in the world of contingencies, there remains enough freedom to flatter pride, enough sanctions to satisfy justice, enough 'penances' to satisfy lovers of the worst emotions – (and we shall see this shortly). But that the Will of Heaven has from all eternity governed and prepared the changes and transformation of the Universe, that all beings we know, from the most material molecule to the stars rolling in the deepest heavens, obey the Laws of this Provident Will, and that only Humanity is capable of reacting, of destroying the harmony of the

[5] We are deliberately using the most concrete language here, so that what we mean may be plain to all.

universal plan, to contravene the will of heaven, and this for the sole purpose of evading the common good, and of being, in the whole Universe, alone and eternally unhappy—this is what neither logic, nor metaphysics, nor the ideal conception we have of God, allows us either to admit, or even to discuss for a single moment.

Moreover, when we finally study the conditions of the human race, we shall have even more decisive proof of this. But let us also bear in mind, as a purely moral and equally convincing demonstration, that there is not a single theocratic or religious system which has included this appalling claim among its fundamental dogmas. Brahmanism, Buddhism, Christianity—all were regimes of love and harmony, flowing from the lips of apostles, enlightened and benevolent: only purely human, political or social applications turn them into instruments of terror and domination. Suited to the ambition of individuals, these additions are hallmarks of the presumptuous earthly cooperation with the divine work; and in the eyes of the wise, they have no more intrinsic value than those very people who created them for their own private gain. Created by men, they have no consequence beyond Humanity.

Let us not dwell further on this, in the face of such striking evidence, where logic must corroborate our highest hopes lest we appear biased. But let us remember that, in the name of Heaven's Will itself, nothing contained within the Universal has the power to alter anything in the Universal.

When Humanity reaches, along the curve it has ascended, the end of the spiral that constitutes its evolution within the Universe, it transforms (i.e. it disappears, or, to put it bluntly, it dies). But when we consider the curve of the Universe in its successive revolutions, we immediately see that there can be neither disappearance, even momentary, nor any negative phenomenon of the kind we call *death*; there is a perfectly normal transition from one state of rest to another; this transition, in the workings of the Universe, involves no more jolts or unexpected events than the transition between two consecutive moments in the lives of human beings. There is therefore no irregularity of any kind in the movement, nor in the Harmony: and the transition from one spiral to another, or the transition of Humanity to the modification that follows it, is marked only by a *change in the nature of the relative constitution of the beings undergoing modification*. We shall see this in a more precise, *more human* way, and one that affects us more closely, in the Conditions of the Individual. But we must realise from the outset that the phenomenon of transmodification lies essentially and exclusively in this single change – which is necessarily an improvement – that it is an increase, not a decrease, and that it is therefore far more a *birth* than a *death*. In reality, it is neither one nor the other; and it is just as foolish to see it as an *end* as it would be to call the passing of an express train past a station where the timetable forbids it to stop a sudden halt, or even a derailment. These changes therefore always take place normally, calmly, and with benefit; and they must, as a result of this absolute certainty, lose whatever temporary pain they may cause the individual. The community of beings passes from one existence to another, through various means and by mechanisms that are always

similar to themselves, without a single moment of death, disappearance, or even eclipse.

The divine essence that permeates the particles of the Universe, the divine attraction that governs their movements—these are the guarantors of their perpetuity. And Humanity participates, like the entire Universe, in this perpetuity, in its process of change, and in that which this change contains of the Eternal.

Humanity, which is one of the cycles of the Universe, is not necessarily the last; it seems very exalted to us, because we are part of it, and because we understand the lower cycles better than the higher ones; but we all perceive very clearly, indeed we are convinced, that we are not the beings whose relative perfection immediately precedes Total Perfection. Even in ancient mythology, there are giants, demigods, and a host of intermediaries between Olympus and us; even in Christian hagiography, there are the Saints, the Angels, and the nine heavenly choirs, between God and his creatures. The appearance of the universality of opinions accords with the dictates of sentiment and the deductions of logic, leading us to understand that we constitute some variation in the stream of forms, and that we evolve along some spiral of the indefinite cylindrical helix.

But even if Humanity does not constitute the final coil, the existence of this final coil is at least conceivable, even at the present time. The will of Heaven, which has sent beings forth into the stream of forms, is the same as that which draws all beings towards itself; consequently, everything must merge into it. Thus, when considered in the infinite – which is precisely the metaphysical locus of Perfection – the cylinder of creation becomes a cone, and the spiral that unfolded along its lateral surface inevitably merges, at the apex of the cone, with the height of the volume, this height being precisely, as we have seen elsewhere, the geometric locus of the attraction of the will of heaven, and then, at its apex, the metaphysical locus of the will of Heaven itself.

We may therefore consider, as a special and supreme case, the end of the final spiral, that is to say, its meeting with the height of the cylinder, that is to say, the termination of the final modification, which the Sages Chinese call the ‘ultimate mechanism of transformation’ and which is, as logic, metaphysics and mathematics all agree to specify, the return of the Universe to the Will that set it in motion, the return of all beings to the Perfection that brought them into being. – This return is not a ‘victory over opposing elements’; nor is it an extraordinary transformation; it is, like all the other transitions that preceded it, an imperceptible and entirely normal transition. If one would kindly refer to the chapter on *the Laws of Evolution*, one will see that the ‘transformative mechanism’ changes nothing of the essence of the beings that make up the Universe; it simply involves *the removal of Forms*, that is to say, the *End of the Limit*; and this is what the traditional text specifies by saying that the ‘current of forms’ is ended.

In this final cycle, do we possess perfect knowledge of all the preceding cycles? Do we have a clear foreknowledge of the final transformation? Or in

In other words, will the beings of the final cycle regard the loss of their forms as a blessing? Or will they see it as *death*, just as we ourselves believe we see death at the end of human individuality? We cannot impose an opinion here; but analogy suggests that the end of the final transformation should make the same impression on those beings as the end of all previous transformations. And we have raised this question here only to establish once more how false it is to call the transition in question *'death'* and how unreasonable it is to fear it.

This return to Total Perfection, which is determined by the *End of the Limit*, both morally and physically—that is to say, both by the end of the flow of forms and by the end of the individuality of the particles—is clearly understood by this very determination to be: it is the 'return to the bosom of God', the 'Loss in the Great Whole', 'Heaven', 'Paradise'. It is, in a word that sums up all human thought on the subject, *Nirvana*, which the yellow races call *Nibban* (which is the same word).

The greatest of the Chinese mystics, who was perhaps the world's first philosopher, Laozi, perfectly describes what *Nirvana* is: a metaphysical realm of Active Perfection, or of the unmanifested Will of Heaven. (And, indeed, it ceases to be manifested when the flow of forms dries up). We shall see, in the profound works of Laozi, how we are to understand Nirvana, that is to say, how it is understood in the ancient texts of India—which are our own here—and in those of all thinking humanity. Western polemics and criticism have had a field day in distorting it and seeking to turn it into a negation; modern interpretations and attacks found this more convenient. But these incomplete scholars scarcely realised that, in doing so, they were complacently equating total activity with Nothingness; and thus they committed, in metaphysics, the same gross error as that which would be committed, in mathematics, by the ignorant or unwitting pupil who, willingly or not, takes zero for an 'absence' of a digit, or for a digit, and forgets that it is a number.

Can one conceive that beings, once merged into Nirvana, might emerge from it once more, to enter another stream of forms, and thus perpetuate their particular movement? We have seen that mathematics answers in the affirmative; for, in grasping our graphical representation, the cyclic cylinder remains a cylinder, the helix of destiny winds eternally around its lateral surface; or the cylinder, considered in mathematical infinity, becomes a cone, and every cone implies another conical surface opposite at the apex, whose branches diverge indefinitely into transfinite spaces. And thus the helix is endless on both sides. But this *necessity* does not exist in metaphysics, firstly because metaphysical infinity does not admit, like mathematical infinity, of any 'beyond' whatsoever, neither in space, nor in volume, nor in thought; secondly because the eternity of action (intended by the manifestation of Perfection) does not inexorably require a flow of forms; collective movement is just as much a movement as the indefinite sum of individual movements: *form* is not necessary for movement. And finally, potential, unmanifested movement is also a movement. – There is no need to move in order to be in motion, any more than there is a need to act in order to will and to think.

There is therefore no necessity. But, given the current state of our reason, we must acknowledge that the possibility remains. For what is possible today is possible in an indefinite sense. It is simply difficult to conceive that the attraction of the will of heaven, having reintegrated everything, should disintegrate everything once more. And, we repeat, it is not essential to accept this conception as if it were useful to *the Eternal Activity*; movement is no more essential to *activity* than form is *essential* to being. And this is the only point on which the primordial Tradition remains silent, *as if it were unnecessary for the human race to have an opinion on the matter*. That is why two opinions exist, both acceptable: one, that the being reintegrated into Unity remains there eternally; the other, that the emission into the stream of forms is eternal, but that, the individual particles being infinitely numerous, the same particle does not enter the stream of forms twice (which perfectly indicates how indifferent it is to the human race to choose between the two opinions).

One may therefore, in complete freedom, appreciate, according to one's own sentiment, the

‘ Transformation", or the final mechanism, of the Universe. For all chosen paths lead to the single goal. And this goal, the blissful and total Reintegration, is desired both by the written Tradition, by metaphysical reason, by mathematical reason, and by the fulfilment of the three attributes which all religions essentially ascribe to their Gods: Goodness, Justice, and Glory.

# CHAPTER VIII

# THE CONDITIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

We have seen what the Destinies of Humanity are, and what they promise, regarded as a coil of the evolutionary cylinder, as a cycle in the transformation of the Universe. But we know, consequently, that this human cycle encompasses all of humanity, that is to say, the entire human species as we know it, and all its possible varieties, whether preceding or following the species. And we have determined the laws that govern, invariably and inexorably, the human cycle, which is a perfectly normal cycle, and which has nothing special about it – except perhaps for us, because we find ourselves within it at the present time.

This natural interest we have in the cycle within which we evolve—a cycle we know a little better than others, and which we wish to understand deeply—leads us to study the movement of the human species within the cycle, and the conditions of the individual within the species.

These two fields of study are perfectly analogous and encompass phenomena—all of them contingent—of the same nature. We should point out at the outset that, whilst we are stepping outside the realm of pure metaphysics here, we shall nevertheless be compelled by logic and simple common sense to adopt, for objective phenomenalism, only those solutions which are consistent with the demonstrated solutions to metaphysical problems. Thus, equipped with a sure and perfect guide, we enter into the questions that seem most thrilling and most obscure to human beings. And we must not at any moment allow ourselves to be led astray from the path shown to us by this mental guide by personal sensibility, which is quick to be alarmed by logical solutions that seem to offend it, or even to take insufficient account of the individual's innate and unconscious selfishness.

By saying that the species is to the cycle as the individual is to the species, we demonstrate, through this arithmetic relationship, that we may content ourselves with studying the conditions of the individual—a far easier study, since it is our own personal study; it will suffice to generalise analogously to apply it to the species. And this is a task simple enough for us to leave to our readers. Moreover, the beginning and end of individuals, about which we are, at least physically, informed, provide us with excellent insights into the beginning and end of the species. The study of the species, situated between the experimental study of the individuals of which it is composed and the metaphysical study of the cycle of change to which it belongs, can no longer, for our logic, contain anything obscure or uncertain.

The human species is a moment in the cycle; the individual is a moment in the species. But any one of them, from the point of view of the study to be undertaken, may be taken as a standard unit.

This standard unit obeys, at its level, the four fundamental laws of the tetragram, and it occupies the place of its moment within the evolutionary cylinder. It should be situated directly on the helix and its coil, so that the diagram, as is customary, will provide us, by analogy, with the data for the examination.

The individual we are considering is part of the species, and is necessary to the constitution of the species; its relative attributes and essential qualities form the characteristics of the species: one thing matters not at all: that is the number of individuals; one can conceive of a species represented by a single individual, and a species represented by innumerable individuals: thus one does not count the number of individuals; and, whatever their number, there could be fewer or more, without altering the species in any way. This is what is called mathematical innumerability. And we see precisely that the individual is to the species as the point is to the line, the very nature of which is to be composed of an indefinite number of points. And so the explicit graphical representation of the individual will be a point on the spiral representing its species.

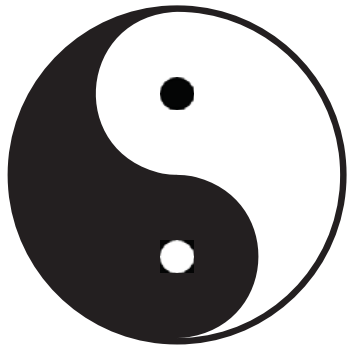
If the individual's position on the spiral is a point, the individual's evolution, relative to the universal evolutionary cylinder, will be represented by a surface.

Let us note straight away that this is not strictly true; firstly for a metaphysical reason, for if individual evolution were represented by a surface, the point of arrival would be similar to the point of departure, and thus there would be no activity (but monotony and immobility through repetition), and there would be no good, since the attraction towards perfection would not be felt – : secondly, for a mathematical reason, for if evolution A were exactly a surface, it would return to its starting point to begin evolution B, and thus the moments of individuals would not traverse the spiral. That is to say, the number of points composing it would be infinite.

However, this number is merely indefinite, and so the evolution starting from point A on the spiral returns to point B, which is the next point, infinitely close but mathematically distinct.

Thus, in reality, individual evolution is a spiral, a helical function, but one whose *pitch is infinitesimal*. This is why, given that we currently live, act and reason on the basis of contingencies, we can—and indeed must—regard the graph of this evolution as a surface. And, in reality, it possesses all the attributes and qualities of a surface, differing from it only when viewed from the perspective of the Absolute. Thus, on our level, the *vital circle* is an immediate truth, and the circle is indeed the representation of the *individual* human cycle. We thus return here to the Western conception, which is not, as we have suggested, false, but poorly applied to the movements of the Universe, whereas it should be applied only to the actions of man alone.

The circle of each individual's destiny is, among the yellow races, represented by the symbol of the Yin-yang.



A few brief explanations are needed regarding the figure shown above. The Yin-Yang is a circle, and we have just explained why. It is a circle representing an evolution, whether individual or specific, and it participates in the universal cyclical cylinder in only two dimensions. Having no thickness, it has no opacity, and is depicted as diaphanous and transparent; that is to say, the patterns of evolution, whether preceding or following its moment, are visible and imprinted upon the gaze through it.

The spiral, which divides the Yin-Yang circle into an S-shape, is not merely a symbol of the universal helix; it is the *descriptive trace*, in mathematical terms, of that helix itself. Let us indeed consider the Yin-Yang from the sole perspective from which it can truly be considered; that is to say, in short, let us consider it in relation to Perfection, and 'from the height of the geometric and metaphysical locus of the will of heaven'[1] .

One of the branches of the S-curve is the mathematical projection, onto a horizontal plane (descriptive geometry), of the portion of the helix which, along the universal cylinder (becoming a cone at infinity), extends from the point on the spiral where the Yin-Yang is tangent, to its reintegration into Perfection. – The other branch of the S-curve is the projection (by transparency of the Yin-Yang circle) of the portion of the helix that extends from active Perfection, from which forms flow, to the same point of tangency of the spiral with the Yin-Yang circle. – This is the entire path of the universal curve, from the will that emits to the will that reintegrates.

One half of the Yin-Yang is black; this is the half representing evolution *below* the circle; the other is white: this is the half representing evolution *above* the circle in question. These two halves are equal: for, since the starting point and the goal are the Infinite, the point under consideration on the spiral may, in relation to the Infinite, be assumed, truthfully and always, to be at an equal distance between the starting point and the point of arrival. The two small inner circles, one black within the white surface, the other white within the black surface, are there, firstly to recall the 'transparency' of the symbol, and secondly to show that these colour contrasts do not constitute a reality, and that white exists beneath and alongside black, and black beneath and alongside the

[1] For clarification of this sentence, please refer to the chapter on 'The Laws of Evolution'.

white, and that, in reality, the Yin-Yang is entirely white, and entirely black, depending on whether one considers it in relation to its starting point or to its goal. Moreover, for those whom a deceptive appearance might still mislead after this clarification, it must be remembered that the Yin-Yang is the symbol of individual human evolution, that is to say, of an activity. This symbol must therefore be regarded as active in itself: and to view it as it ought to be, one must make it rotate around its centre. We then see that it is *monochromatic*, and that, consequently, one can never claim to find in it, even superficially, the slightest trace of dualism.

By existing, the Yin-Yang fulfils the principle of causality: by moving around its centre at the speed of specific human evolution, it fulfils the law of activity; by having a circular form, it fulfils the law of harmony; by being preceded and followed by an indefinite number of concentric circles, it fulfils the law of the good. But let us note here – and this is a point that requires very deep reflection – that the first three principles are fulfilled within the Yin-Yang itself, and that the fulfilment of the fourth principle (the principle of good) lies outside the Yin-Yang; that is to say, to achieve this fulfilment, one must consider the situation of the immediately neighbouring circles. Within a single circle considered in isolation, the law of the good is not satisfied. This means that, *within the context of an individual human evolution, the pull of Heaven's will is not felt.* This astonishing observation emerges from the mathematical analysis of the graph; and it will lead us to metaphysical consequences that are, if not the most unexpected, at least the most remarkable[2] .

We recall that we have demonstrated: the freedom of beings does not exist, insofar as they are parts and functions of universal evolution. Absolute freedom, which includes the freedom to thwart the designs of the will of Heaven, is incompatible with that will, and with God. – Yet we have hinted at a certain freedom of the individual. And now, mathematics shows us that within the vital cycle of the species and the individual, the pull of Heaven's will is not felt; that is to say, within the confines of its particular evolution, the individual enjoys freedom of action. Let us examine the limits and conditions of this freedom.

Entry into the Yin-Yang and exit from the Yin-Yang are not at the individual's disposal: for these are two points which, although belonging to the Yin-Yang, are part of the spiral inscribed on the lateral surface of the cylinder, and which are subject to the pull of Heaven's will. And, in reality, indeed, man is not free regarding his birth or his death. As for his birth, he is free neither to accept nor to refuse it, nor to choose the moment. As for death, he is not free to escape it; nor, in all fairness, should he be free to choose the moment of his death, and this is why, let us say in passing, suicide is the most abnormal act and contrary to the interests of the individual.

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[2] One must never lose sight of the fact that, whilst taken in isolation, the Yin-Yang may be regarded as a circle, in the succession of individual transformations it is a helical element: every individual transformation is essentially a three-dimensional *vortex*; there is only one human stasis; and one never retraces the path already taken. This is to put a stop to any attempt, however ingenious, to adapt the Primordial Tradition to pantheistic or even spiritualist theories (in the specific sense given to this term by certain Western experimenters).

In any case, he is not free from any of the conditions of these two acts; birth propels him irresistibly onto the cycle of an existence which he neither asked for nor chose: death removes him from this cycle, and propels him irresistibly into another, prescribed and foreseen by the will of heaven, without his being able to alter anything. Thus the earthly man is a slave, as regards his birth and his death, that is to say, in relation to the two principal acts of his individual life, the only ones which, in short, sum up his special evolution in relation to the Infinite.

But between his birth and his death, on this circle without depth, on this imponderable surface of the universal volume where the attraction of the will from above has no effect, *the individual is free*. He is absolutely free in the performance and direction of all his earthly acts. He is no longer ruled by the will of heaven: his guide is the obscure conscience, a sort of mental instinct, which is not the same for all individuals, which evolves, thickens, or refines itself with each of them, and which is in direct proportion to the individual's intellectual faculties and the value of the social milieu in which he moves. It is this conscience that is the dynamic generator of his personal actions.

It is within the moral phenomenology in which this consciousness, a mediocre instrument, operates that the contingencies of good and evil arise. And it is personal belief in good and evil, each limited by the other, that makes good and evil an objective reality in the human mind. *It is human consciousness that creates good and evil, and it is human freedom which, by allowing one to follow one or the other, creates responsibilities*.

We cannot emphasise these rational truths enough: consciousness, which generates good and evil, is a specific, temporary and protean feature, even within the species; freedom of action is extremely limited in time and within individual circumstances; the acts performed through this freedom and judged by this conscience are therefore relative acts, exclusive to the species and the individual, having value only within and through the objective contexts in which they arose, and being of no consequence in the eyes of the Infinite. Merits or demerits, benefits or offences are of the same nature as the acts that produce them; and the sanctions attached to them by virtue of the very justice that is in the essence of the Infinite are of the same value, of the same degree and of the same repercussion as the acts that motivate them.

Man is a finite and relative being: he can commit only relative acts, generating relative merits, and liable to relative sanctions. What is done in time can be assessed only in time: a figure inscribed in a two-dimensional space cannot have three dimensions; here we are bound by the axiomatic evidence of the simplest geometry. – Therefore, a man's act, which is a temporary and finite act, however guilty the general conscience may suppose it to be, cannot bring about an eternal and infinite punishment for him. Therefore, eternal punishments – hell, not in the Christian sense, but in the Roman Catholic sense – do not exist.

But illogical sentimentalists cry out that a sin committed against an Infinite Being, God, must entail infinite punishment. This is a double absurdity. A contingency cannot affect the Absolute. How, then, do people imagine God to be constituted, that He could

be insulted by a man? One must be God to be able to offend God: and those who seek to convince us of such a terrible power have never considered this.

But there is something else. Man's relative freedom, as we have seen and demonstrated, presupposes the non-exercise of attraction, that is to say, the indifference of Heaven's will. And in truth, man could not have acted freely if the will of Heaven had not allowed him to do so. It has taken no interest in the matter: it cannot therefore be offended by something in which it takes no interest, and which it does not guide, solely because it did not wish to guide it.

We therefore do not deny punishment, any more than we deny responsibility, any more than we deny freedom; but the limits imposed on freedom mitigate the punishment to the same extent, for we see it as temporary, relative and contingent. And now that we know it to be objective in every respect, we recognise it as necessary. This sanction is exercised, according to the will of heaven, within the individual sphere where the act was committed, or in the next sphere; it matters not: for our acts 'vibrate' and are inscribed along the length of our personality, in an indefinite—and not infinite—manner. And the sanction, which, like the act, occurs in time, may be delayed indefinitely across the cycles. Thus, the outcome of the acts of one existence is one of the constituent elements of subsequent existences.

But let us not forget: this purely objective element of joy or pain cannot in any way influence the course of general evolution. Whether we have acted well or badly, the cycle that awaits us is the same for us all; some traverse it in happiness, others in tears; but the step we climb at the end of each vital cycle is the same, and brings us all, irresistibly and of equal worth, closer to the Infinite to which we are destined.

It is a purely Taoist problem—one we shall study in the treatise on the Kan ying, which is entirely devoted to it—to determine the sum of the vibrations of our actions and the consequences that result from them. But the principle is established here; it satisfies, as we have said, our conscience and the idea of our freedom; it responds both to the Goodness and the Justice of Heaven; and it leaves the unbreakable laws of tradition intact. – It places the contingent dualism of good and evil, as well as the merits and sanctions of human actions, in their proper place. And it proves, in such a conclusive manner that we shall have no need to return to the subject, that the belief—whether naive or self-serving—in eternal punishments is at once a moral barbarism, a metaphysical nonsense, and an insulting denial of the essential attributes of the Divinity.

Between birth and death, the human being is therefore free; we have seen the reason for and the means of this objective freedom; we see its manifestations every day; we shall see its consequences elsewhere, in that part of the *Rational Path* which in the West is called Morality. But, setting aside all phenomenology, let us consider what this birth and this death are, the timing, circumstances and outcomes of which are independent of the will of the one who experiences them.

According to all our previous formulations, and according to the irrefutable logic of geometry, birth is the entry of an evolving particle into the human cycle; death is the exit of that particle from the human cycle: but, in order to enter the

human cycle and to appear there as an individual within the species, this particle had to emerge from the cycle inferior to the human cycle; or, to use the crude, customary image, it had to *die* in that cycle. But, upon leaving the human cycle, upon losing the individuality of the species, the evolving fragment enters the cycle superior to the human cycle, and to use our everyday language, it is born into this new cycle; birth and death therefore accompany and complement one another; human birth is the immediate consequence of a death; human death is the immediate cause of a birth. One of these circumstances never occurs without the other. And, as time does not exist here, we can affirm that, between the intrinsic value of the phenomenon of birth and the intrinsic value of the phenomenon of death, there is metaphysical identity. As for their relative value, and because of the immediacy of the consequences, death at the end of cycle X is superior to birth on the same cycle X, by the entire value of the attraction of the will of heaven on cycle X, that is to say, mathematically, by the value of the pitch of the evolutionary helix[3] . The foregoing may seem paradoxical because, to help us understand better, we use the words *birth* and *death* to denote the transitions between cycles, and because naive human vanity attaches a sense of increase to entry into humanity (birth) and a sense of decrease to exit from humanity (death), as if humanity occupied the apex of a parabola, beyond which one could only descend. There is no error more fatal and more ridiculous. We see metaphysically that, in the succession of cycles, *death* is an advance upon *birth*, because entry into cycle X + 1 is superior to entry into cycle X. – We see this geometrically on the evolutionary curve of the universe. We shall see this psychologically, by considering, in the human specimen, which elements are brought by birth, and which are affected by death[4] .

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[3] We reiterate that we do not know the essential value of this geometric element, because we have no recollection of the cyclical states through which we have passed, and so we cannot measure the metaphysical height that separates us today from the state from which we have emerged.

[4] Are we interested in the curiosity of an algebraic exercise? Let us represent the data as follows: death = D. Birth = B. – The human cycle = H… The cycle below the human cycle = H − 1. The cycle above the human cycle = H + 1. And this can be done for any cycle. Let us express algebraically, by equation, the propositions stated above algebraically, by equation, we have:

M.H = N (H + 1) and N.H = M (H − 1).

Expanding, we have:

M.H = N.H + N, and N.H = M.H − M.

Let's substitute M.H. with its value; we get:

M.H = M.H − M + N,

that is to say, M = N. That is to say, since all coefficients and indices cancel out, *the phenomena of death and birth*, considered in themselves and outside of cycles, are *perfectly equal*. – Let us also assume that X is equal to the unknown value of the improvement obtained during any modification; we have:

M (H − 1) + N.H + X = M.H + N (H + 1) or

M.H − M + N.H + X = M.H + N.H + N X =

M + N

Here too, the coefficients cancel out; and we find that X (*improvement*) *is specifically due to the sum of a death and a birth*, and *to the coincidence* of this death and this birth. And – strangely enough – we see that, even algebraically, this X, whose nature and function we know, is *incalculable in quantity*.

This is not the place to specify which are the seven elements that tradition recognises in the human species. We shall see this in full in the section of these studies concerning the physiological and psychic sciences, derived directly from the doctrine of Laozi. But we can state right now – and this assertion will come as no surprise to those who have scrutinised the mysteries of the Hindu ternary and septenary – that the seven human elements of the Primordial Tradition can be summarised in a ternary, and that they fit very well with the ternary: *body*, *soul*, *spirit*, as understood and defined by Western adepts of the High Science. And it is upon this triad, familiar to all, and which Roman Catholicism must, according to its fundamental texts, recognise itself, that we shall base our investigations and our demonstration.

Human beings are not single entities; they are aggregates, and, in reality, aggregates of elements that are by nature rather inconsistent with one another, because they differ *fundamentally* from one another. These three elements, which constitute the human being as we know it, exist independently of one another; there are bodies without souls or spirits, such as earthly matter; there are souls without minds or bodies, such as the invisible fluids emanating from physical, celestial, or wandering forces; there are minds without bodies, such as what Catholics call the ‘choirs of angels’, which correspond to an absolute reality.

We are saying nothing new here, but we are presenting, from a new angle, the perception of ancient things. The elements that make up man therefore do not need to be together to exist; but it is their union that constitutes *man*. Before their union, there was not yet humanity; after their separation, there is no longer humanity. Humanity is formed by their temporary cohesion.

It is therefore not upon these elements themselves, but upon their assembly and cohesion, that the phenomena of birth and death, peculiar to our species, are exercised. We must even say that these elements, taken each in their own right, are indifferent to birth and death, which can affect only their modalities – or their protean qualities.

This truth is already glimpsed and felt – if not demonstrated – in relation to the mind and the soul. It is no less precise when it comes to matter. It would be madness to say that the act of generation creates the matter of which the human body is formed: for the germ merely fertilises, that is to say, it brings about the development of the human form on condensed particles of matter. It is foolish to say that the act of death kills matter: it disintegrates it, that is to say, it liberates it from the human compound, removes the form in which alone it could form part of man, and returns it to the stream of forms, where it will not remain unused, so long as the Universe remains under the rule of the Limit.

Human birth is therefore the formula for the composition of an aggregate (in chemical terms: the formula for the production of a precipitate). As we are evolving—that is to say, speaking in terms of contingencies, making progress through cycles, along the revolutions of the helix that leads us to the will of heaven—this birth is beneficial; that is to say, the aggregate thus formed contains elements superior to those of the preceding aggregate, whose birth into human stasis

has just caused its immediate dissociation. The *exit* from the pre-human stasis corresponds to the dispersion, into the universal current, of an element inferior to the last human element, or of the most massive and rudimentary part of matter. *Entry* into the human stasis, which coincides with this, corresponds to the acquisition of a superior element, the Spirit, or a part of the Spirit which the other stasis did not possess. We are, of course, speaking in a contingent manner, for it is becoming increasingly scientifically probable, and metaphysically indispensable, that the various elements of which beings are composed are the different states of one and the same *Thing* (let us say: of Matter alone) purified and sublimated, through individuals, under the beneficent influence of the will of heaven, by the continuous efforts of the personality.

The phenomenon of death is absolutely identical, and it only seems to us to produce analogous effects, but in the opposite direction, because we have acquired the bad habit of considering it solely from the perspective of human stasis. The *exit* from this stasis (death) corresponds to the dispersion of the body, to the loss of the human material form, which is the lowest part of our composite being. But entry into the supra-human stasis (birth), which coincides with human death, involves the accession of a spiritual element, the value of which we do not know, and which is superior to the best of our human elements. This is why human death, since it coincides with a better birth, is, metaphysically speaking, superior to human birth.

Thus, the human aggregate is clearly defined. None of its elements belongs to it in its own right, since they all form part of other aggregates, whether inferior or superior. None of them is fundamentally affected by human phenomena. The aggregate is therefore constituted solely by the temporary association of these independent elements. And the human characteristic is that: nowhere else are these elements found united together, in the order and with the proportions they have in our state. The human distinction is therefore not a distinction of essence, nor of nature; it is a distinction of degree and method. This degree, this method, in a word this particular *arrangement*, is the INDIVIDUAL.

But that is not all there is to man; and here we touch upon the very heart of the metaphysical matter as regards our present state. The elements of the human aggregate, which we have agreed to condense into three main ones, are independent of one another, and assume, in the evolution of the Universe, diverse and even disparate qualities, the interplay of which tends to drive them apart: as we have already established above. However, the human aggregate, whilst not as homogeneous as one might wish, is solid; it therefore possesses *within itself* a cohesive force to which it obeys.

It has been said that this cohesive force is the divine will; it may well be so, and it is evidently a consequence of it; but it is not the will of Heaven itself. Let us refer to the indisputable geometric concepts of the preceding chapters; one will see that, in the human state, the will of heaven is not felt, and that it is precisely for this reason that man possesses a relative freedom, and that the graphical symbol of his state can be a circle and not a helical revolution. This force is not the will of heaven; nor is it the force of the

constituent elements of humanity, which is a personal, independent, and consequently centrifugal force in relation to the human composite.

This *force*, which is an emanation of the will of Heaven, is our own: this force which *holds* the human collective *together*, and *which gives rise to and animates the individual*, is PERSONALITY.

*Individuality and Personality*: distinct states, which do not exist on the same plane, which do not share the same organisation or the same existence, and of which the second is superior to the first by the very same degree that eternity is superior to time: terms which, however, an unfortunate habit has made synonymous, or at any rate analogous, and whose confusion has created, in scientific reasoning and popular imagination, the most detestable errors: when we realise that the person is the source of all the successive individuals who have embodied the cohesive force we were speaking of a moment ago, we shall understand how propositions and entire systems, which appear to be at odds, harmonise and fall into place, owing to a lack of definition or a confusion of objects.

*Individuality* is, in appearance, personality considered within a cycle; in reality, it is not even that; for personality exists entirely outside the individual, and is affected neither by his birth, nor by his death, nor by any of his changes within the cycle. Precisely, individuality is the result of the personality's influence on a composite, on a human composite, for example. Consequently, individuality is absolutely bound to the composite and transforms with it; the personality endures, always remaining true to itself.

Thus the human individual, who is the result of the physiological and psychological influences of the elements of the human compound upon one another, the human individual appears, develops and disappears, at the same time as the compound of which he is the expression. The personality, insofar as it acts upon the compound, is called the human personality; but this is merely an avatar, a temporary measure of its value: it applies today to the human compound, yesterday to the compound that preceded it, tomorrow to the compound that will follow it; and it is always true to itself, for the nature and determining factors of a force are independent of its point of application. The individual is therefore protean and contingent: personality is immortal: and it contains the indefinite succession of individuals.

We can now clearly see, therefore, what constitutes the 'human personality', a fragment of the universal personality. It consists of a human aggregate, which constitutes the individual; it also consists of the movements generated amongst them by the coming together of the individual's elements; finally, it consists of the movements that the personality imparts, in its effort to bring cohesion to the individual.

One may, by a reasonable analogy, infer that, within this human trinity, the first term corresponds to the body, the second to the soul, and the third to the spirit—not, of course, in their essence, but in their manifestation. However, one must not, on pain of error, push the consequences of this analogy too far—an analogy made primarily for the sake of simplification—nor create new categories.

Thus is the Buddhist and Pythagorean law of Reincarnation clarified, proven, and vindicated of all its slanders, a law which many of its adherents

even even interpreted it poorly. This must not be understood in relation to individuals, for it is contrary to their condition: it must be understood in relation to the personality, which, when one individual (that is to say, a field of action and endeavour) has passed away, takes hold of another individual; that is to say, when one individual *has died*, *it is reborn* in another individual. It should be noted that the individual's choice is such that it always satisfies the four primordial laws of activity, freedom, harmony and goodness, and that thus *animal* metempsychosis appears, here too, as a ridiculous absurdity and a veritable barbarity. And so the personality – which at a given moment was, is, or will be the human personality, depending on the stage of the cycles under consideration – will pass from existence to existence until '*reintegration into the supreme existence, in God*'. Nowhere better than here, to demonstrate how, once definitions have been agreed upon, there is but one way to speak the truth, nowhere will this sentence—which I deliberately emphasise—be more apt, a sentence from an occultist who was exclusively Western, my dear friend and brother Stanislas de Guaita.

It is in this immutability of the person that our vague desire for the infinite finds satisfaction; it is in this that the far more precise affection we have for ourselves, through our fellow human beings, must be entrusted: it will suffice for us, if we know how to sublimate these affections, and detach ourselves from the lower aspirations, which are too heavy to follow us in the indefinite ascent of the evolutionary helix. It is this which, in Christianity, constitutes the immortality of the soul. It is this which is, at once, the witness and the pledge of our eternity.

Just as this distinction—so profound, so necessary, and which seems subtle only because it has been misunderstood for too long— sheds light on the law of Rebirth, to which we may all, in whatever traditional faith, be devotees; in the same way, it will shed light on the rational phenomenon of human death, and the cause of the tragic anguish and horror it inspires in us.

We have amply demonstrated how every *death* (and human death is no exception) is a beneficial passage from one state to a higher state. Thus the deepest thinkers have yearned for death as the sole means of their perfection. Yet all humanity, and these thinkers themselves, rebel with their very being at the moment of the passage. And when we see one of our own die before us, despite all the metaphysical reasoning we may employ, we are seized by terror and sorrow; and we weep both for the departed and for ourselves, who will nevertheless follow them. How can we explain this universal feeling, which would be madness were it not for factors other than those we have just mentioned coming into play?

It is precisely because we are particularly affected, in this transition, by the elements that this transition touches and affects most significantly. And let us consider psychologically the role of human death in the evolution of our personality.

The body – that is to say, the form – and the form characteristic of the species no longer has any reason to exist, and indeed *disappears*, more or less rapidly, to take on other contours, to become another form, which is indifferent to us, in the same

as we are indifferent to any inanimate human form. That is not where the trance and the cause of the pain lie.

The personality – as we have seen – endures: and it endures, enriched and perfected through the lives it has lived and the individuals it has inhabited; it is enriched by its own efforts, which the individual in whom it has strived returns to it at the moment of its dissolution. And this baggage that the personality carries with it into other cycles is the sacred legacy of our ideas, our conceptions, our labours and our sufferings. And since, in order to individualise itself anew, the personality ascends a degree, it is not there either that regret lies.

But we have shown that the human composite still comprises the movements caused by the interaction of its elements with one another, and by the sum of its elements in relation to its personality.

These are not his ideas, which are the offspring of his personality and the will of heaven. These are his impressions, his affections; in a word, his *human feelings*. Will the personality carry them away? No, since they belonged to the man. Will we ever find them again? Will we feel them in the same way elsewhere? No. For that to happen, one would have to find all the constituent elements of these impressions, that is to say, the elements of the human composite, associated in the same way, with the same coefficients: in other words, one would have to find, in another cycle, the characteristic of the human cycle. That is impossible. Certain human elements will be found again, but not all, and not of the same value; they will therefore no longer influence one another in the same way; and the personality will no longer exert itself upon them with the same results. '*Human* feelings' are therefore unique to man and disappear with him. And whilst his body returns to matter to enter another stream of forms, whilst his unalterable spirit guides the personality in its ascent, his *soul*—which is the most ethereal, if you will, of all matter, yet which is matter, according to the very words of the princes of the Catholic Church[5] , his soul vanishes into the psychic world, into the ether of vibrations, into the realm of wandering forces, which we still know so little about, but of which we nevertheless know today that their reduced energy is *literally astral*. That which was the soul-characteristic of man, we shall never find again.

Reasonably speaking, we ought not to regret it, since its disappearance is immediately filled by an element of analogous essence and superior quality. But impulsively, we prefer what we have and know to what we do not know; yet we have become attached to this bundle of impressions and feelings all the more because it was the defining feature of our human condition. This exclusively human sensitivity, the emotional bond by which we were bound to one another, was what was most dear to us. And it is this, this alone, that merges, with no possible return to individuality, into the universal!

And let us note that this suffering is all the more grievous to us because the seat of the suffering caused by the loss of this element lies precisely within this element

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[5] Anima: materia prima (St Thomas Aquinas: ch. 75). See also Pope Clement V's bull on the same subject.

It is neither through our sensuality nor our reason, but through our sensitivity that we mourn the loss of the emotional bond represented by the man dying beside us. And this is so true that our deepest regrets are directed, not towards the man of genius, who held us by the mind, nor towards our parents, who held us by blood, but towards those whose lives ran parallel to our own, whose actions were akin to our own, and whose sensitivity, as a result, penetrated our own, and most often determined its movements.

Very few can claim to be immune to this irrational yet natural pain, which is *human altruism*—that is to say, *generalised selfishness*—for reason itself declares itself powerless in the face of it. And the excesses of our sensitivity are overcome here only by the restraint of the most powerful will. But that is not the point. Let us be content to have dissected death, and to have shown its precise dissection, right down to the very feelings it provokes in us.

And yet, having explained what birth is and what human life is, let us not thus abandon the study of the individual's final condition. For, as we have said, the eternal personality ascends the evolutionary spiral, enriched in its modes by the sublimated sum of known ideas and felt impressions. And so, even as regards the sentient human state, it does not perish entirely. Nor did the states that preceded it perish. Our personality, individualised in human form, with its own movements, is the legacy—of which we are unaware—of previous cycles. Because we have no memory of it, this cannot be denied. We have a clear yearning for the future: we have vague memories, like veiled flashes, of the past: this yearning and these vague memories are peculiar to our human condition. It is logical that, as we ascend through the cycles, knowledge of the future and memory of the past should illuminate our understanding. And we shall then conceive of these profound truths as axioms, the conception of which we are today compelled to seek through analogical synthesis.

Let us therefore recognise that, not only for our evolution but also for the definitive formation of our being, the passage through human existence is beneficial to us, and that the best of it remains with us through these rebirths, the ancient law of which we have just confirmed. Let us recognise that nothing we do, say or think is ever truly lost. Let us recognise that even this sentimentality, which leads us wrongly to regard the departure from earthly existence as the worst of evils, finds, in the end, its full satisfaction. May we be forgiven, after such a rigorous study, for this deliberate detour into the realm of sentiment. Our sole aim here is to demonstrate the excellence of traditional logic, and the far-seeing omnipotence of the Will of Heaven.

Since the goal of Evolution is unity, all the feelings aroused by physical beauties, all the ideas aroused by sentimental beauties, inscribed in the sequence of modifications, tend towards the metaphysical realm, where all beauties, having become splendour, and all ideas, having become Truth, vanish, conscious, into Perfection.

Thus the personalities, which, through such individualisations, drew closer to one another over the course of the cycles, draw ever closer at every moment: these earthly unions, whatever name we give them, which we fear death may dissolve, grow ever closer through the changes, as our elements become more perfect; so that – although human bonds seem close to us – we are here further apart from one another than we shall ever be in future cycles. Our harsh and severe logic thus leads us to an inevitable conclusion, which satisfies sentimentality – stripped, of course, of its innate selfishness – better than all daydreams and all mysticism. The affinities we observe in the human world are the culmination of the efforts of other cycles that preceded ours; they are, likewise, the preparation and the promise of closer and more selfless bonds between those very people who formed them and made them modes of their personality. Thus the pure ideas, those who conceived them, those who inspired them, and who adored one another in them—all, sublimated and carried aloft by the current of beneficent Evolution, we ascend, *eternally united*, into the Universal[6] .

We conclude here this summary of the *metaphysical Path* followed and preserved by the Yellow Tradition, which is – pending further discoveries – the only Tradition preserved to the present day without interpolation, suppression or obfuscation. We would have made it shorter had we not feared further obscuring the understanding of these delicate matters. In other, briefly analogous studies, we shall later examine, through the philosophy of Laozi, the *Rational Way*, and, through the philosophy of Kongzi (Confucius), the *Social Way*, both of which stem just as closely and directly from the same Tradition.

But we would like to leave, in our closing lines, a practical corollary to the metaphysical overview we have just sketched. We would like to derive from this teaching a consistent and appropriate method of work for those who are curious, not merely to read the preceding lines, but to undertake the labour they leave to be done, and which they advocate.

This method of work follows logically from the principles we have just established: let us set it out briefly.

Man's destiny of activity is revealed in the activity bestowed upon him by the cyclical process of which present-day humanity forms a part. We are not the masters of this activity, nor of its purpose, nor even of its means. Yet, in order to comply with the

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[6] It should be noted that, in this metaphysical study, we have dealt with the human stasis, considering it in isolation from all other stases. What we have said of it may generally be applied to any other specific stasis, to any other individual vortex. We merely point out, once again, that the individual passes through the same species only once, and that his vortex is merely the application, to his individual self, of the figurative spiral of the species' evolution. As for the relationships between the vortices and between the stases, Chinese Tradition defers the study of these to another part of its philosophy. Indeed, the succession of stases has a certain regularity and coordination, which falls within the realm of Reason. The modifications emanating from the being, the transformation that reintegrates beings, and Nirvana (Nibbana), which is the culmination and end of the series, must be studied in terms of their movements and their reciprocal influences. The text of Wenwang itself states this explicitly: 'Change and transformation are the *Rational Way* of activity'. We shall therefore find an exposition of this in the *Philosophy of the Rational Way*, that is to say, in Laozi's Taoist system.

In accordance with the will of Heaven, we must align our movement with His, and also, as Tseu-kong expressly states, silence those human desires that would contravene the good resulting from activity. In what better way can this personal and intellectual movement of the human being consist than in the study of the activity of Heaven, our model, a study which will enable us to participate, as far as possible, in that activity?

The activity of Heaven causes everything to change and transform; the study of it can never be complete; it is no longer accurate the moment it has been expressed, if indeed it could have been expressed at that precise moment. The study of the heavens is therefore never finished; indeed, it has never even begun. And we must not fear devoting all the faculties of our reason to it.

How should this study be conducted? It must be carried out with a view to activity, in parallel with and beneath the activity of the heavens; such is the corollary of the great symbolic formula; that is to say, with all principles, all freedom, all harmony, all good – with all principles, that is to say, by relying on the principle of the activity of the heavens and on those that flow from it; – with all freedom, that is to say, by freeing oneself from all passion, which is a chain – with all harmony, that is to say, by logically and naturally deducing all the consequences of all principles: – with all good, that is to say, by following the rule of perfectible reason which comes to us from Heaven. Under these conditions, the work of the gifted individual will be favourable to him. Moreover, in study, there is no error of which one can be entirely guilty before Heaven; and any responsibility we might bear for them would lie elsewhere than in the present moment; they are not imputed to us if they do not stem from our immediate will, that is to say, if, whilst studying, we observe the principles by which Heaven moves, and if they arise solely from the relative imperfection of our present condition.

At such a height, any conception, however false, however foolish, is a merit and a tribute paid. Insufficient ideas, detestable terms—such are the elements of our studies, owing to our nature and the mediocrity of our means. Does this mean that we should give them up, and be content with the faith of children and the simple-minded? Certainly not: the intelligence bestowed upon man, and of which he can take pride only if he makes use of it, makes immobility a crime; it would be counted against him as indifference. Or else it would be that, in seeking the truth, we might fear to encounter only error, and to become attached to it, and that we might thus lack confidence in heaven and in the destiny it has bestowed upon us. – The vision, without flinching, of that which is above us, is the duty of the modification of our mind, so that it may attain its definitive transformation.

For this centre, which is One and All, there are no errors; in the face of the Essence, there is no appreciable divergence between two contrary statements uttered by us, nor between what we call true and false. Human truth and falsehood are so far removed from the Truth that, when considered in relation to it, they merge infinitely into a single inexactitude, which we are worthy to commit when we do so with a pure and ardent heart, following the Way of Heaven.

Whatever path we one take, we walk always towards Centre, inevitably. Every step taken, in whatever sense, through study, brings us

. The concepts, naturally false, that we put forward today, resonate throughout our entire personality, and beyond the limits that our senses impose on the present world. As they rise, spiral by spiral, through the changes that await us, they shed their error, whilst at the same time rejecting the ridiculous terms with which we had necessarily clothed them.

All work, all thought, even every dream is therefore conducive to this. We must not be daunted by missteps and troubles, for which we are responsible only through our present nature and destiny. And it is only by accumulating errors that the gifted man one day rises to the height of truth.

# CHAPTER IX

# THE INSTRUMENTS OF DIVINATION

***(Texts and Documents)***

I am inclined to present here a few texts and documents drawn from the Yijing and from the various commentaries or philosophical paraphrases of the aphorisms of Fohi and Wenwang. We have seen that the Yijing was applicable to all conditions of human existence, as well as to all contingent sciences, and even to the study of metaphysics and the subjective. The I Ching also had a divinatory aspect. Along with its political symbolism, this is certainly the most popular part of the original text.

Let us say straight away that it is the most misinterpreted and the least understood. For the sages and philosophers of the Far East have never taken an interest in empiricism, and they have never focused their favourite studies on the divinatory aspect of the I Ching. Only itinerant priests, known as *taosse*, who occupy a middle ground—and not even the golden mean—between mendicant monks and jugglers, have made this study their passion, whilst at the same time their livelihood. Abandoned to the machinations of mediocre minds, the divinatory tradition of the I Ching soon became obscured; and it can be said that it is now completely lost.

It is not for us to have the naive audacity to attempt even its reconstruction; for the texts of the Book are virtually unintelligible without the Oral Tradition, or at least their meaning is so vague that one can draw from them whatever interpretations one wishes. Now, it must be acknowledged that for centuries (we may specify roughly twenty-one centuries), the divination Oral Tradition has been lacking.

Laozi and Confucius knew of it; Laozi scorned it as a base pastime. Confucius passed it on to his disciples; but no trace of it has been found since the destruction of the Books and the execution of the Scholars, ordered by Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi (213 BC).

Our concern for accuracy leads us to admit that we have found nowhere any written explanations or authoritative commentaries on divination. If such exist, they are hidden deep within the innermost sanctuaries, or they guard their repository so jealously that even high-ranking Far Eastern initiates have no inkling of their existence.

This was also the view of Mr Philastre, from whom I borrow—for want of a better alternative—passages from his excellent translation of the I Ching, which I have already

mentioned. It is hardly surprising, under these circumstances, that we are presenting texts that are virtually incomprehensible and tables that are almost indecipherable; it is nevertheless useful that these texts and tables should not disappear entirely from human memory: perhaps some Kabbalist or some scholar, deeply versed in Western sciences, may find in them points of resemblance and common features with divination, as handed down to us by Greece and the Middle Ages. In any case, we do not believe that light, at least from the Far East, can be shed where Mr Philastre was forced to admit he was lost in darkness.

Mr Philastre, in fact (and this is why we have chosen his translations where we were not required to translate the text for the first time), Mr Philastre was not merely an eminent sociologist, the likes of whom the halls of our various Institutes have never seen. He had spent a large part of his life in China and Indochina: a capable naval officer, a thoroughly expert and distinguished philosopher, he had made good use of his long stay amongst the Yellow People to penetrate their spirit, their traditions and their society. Thanks to his high culture and an uncommon capacity for assimilation, he had managed to overcome the mistrust of the Empire's cautious mandarins, and to cross thresholds that are ordinarily closed, and which are opened, in rare instances, to men who are not of the race. He thus gathered the most precious teachings; and, alongside certain significant advantages, he received such instruction and collaborated with such interlocutors that his translation of the 'Primordial Tradition' stands as the finest monument one could ever hope to erect in a Western language in honour of Chinese philosophies.

These benefits were not without duties towards the race that had thus welcomed him, and towards the sages who had thus elevated his spirit.

In the Far East, these duties take on a particularly explicit and binding form. Mr Philastre realised this too late, when, following the death in Tonkin of the heroic Garnier, he accepted the mission to negotiate as plenipotentiary, on behalf of France, with the Empire of Annam. The obligations of his heart were at odds with those of his office; he tried in vain to reconcile them, and fell victim to an inextricable situation. Out of a spirit of reverence and obedience to his masters, he attempted to conclude a treaty that would not be disadvantageous to them. Thus he appeared to disregard the interests of his country, and, at the same time, despite everything, he betrayed the most secret desires of his conscience. He was relieved of his duties, left the Far East with no intention of returning, and had to content himself, in the south of France, with a menial teaching post, where he has just died, poor and unknown, having gained from his labours and his learning nothing but the steadfastness of his resignation.

I have sought to highlight these few features of a truly tragic existence, in order to draw out this lesson: that committing oneself to an intellectual impasse leads to the social ruin of the individual.

## The Numbers

*A.* Heaven is one, three, five, seven, nine. Earth is two, four, six, eight, ten. Such are the numbers of heaven and earth. The positions of the numbers 1 and 6 are at the bottom; 2 and 7, at the top; 3 and 8, on the left; 4 and 9, on the right; 5 and 10, in the middle.

*B.* The number five indicates the extent of that which begets; the number ten, the extent of that which is begotten. One, two, three, four represent the position of the four symbols: six, seven, eight, nine are the numbers that correspond to them.

*C.* There are five celestial numbers and five terrestrial numbers: in each series, the numbers correspond in pairs. The sum of the first is twenty-five; the sum of the second is thirty; their total is fifty-five. This is what completes the cycles of expansion and contraction. The celestial numbers are odd; the terrestrial numbers are even. 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 9 and 10, form matching groups. Likewise, in the five situations, two corresponding numbers match, namely: 1 and 6, 2 and 7, 3 and 8, 4 and 9, 5 and 10. The unit changes and generates water; 6 transforms it, – 2 generates fire; 7 transforms it, – 3 generates wood; 8 transforms it, – 4 generates metal; 9 transforms it, – 5 modifies earth: 10 transforms it. Thus the five elements and the five planets undergo the phenomena of contraction and expansion, of going and returning.

*D.* According to the *secret centre of the River Chart*, the celestial number five is multiplied by the terrestrial number, yielding fifty. But when consulting the oracle using this number, its use is limited to forty-nine.

## ON THE METHOD OF PERFORMING DIVINATION USING THE SHI HERB.

Hang *one* between the little finger of the left hand and the next finger. Separate what remains after counting in groups of four. Gather into the two spaces between the middle fingers of the left hand. As soon as the operation is finished, one picks up the whole; one gathers and separates as after the first time, so as to form the groups in both hands, and thus one repeats the same operation.

*E.* There are two hundred and sixteen spells relating to positivity, and one hundred and forty-four relating to negativity: three hundred and sixty in total, equivalent to the days of a revolution.

*F.* The *River Table* has four sides: great positivity is 1, followed by the number 9; small positivity is 3, followed by 6; small negativity is 2, followed by 8. The rule for counting and eliminating the strands (the strands of the shi grass, which in divination represent the lines of the hexagrams) consists of counting together what remains after the three modifications, setting aside the unit from the outset, and counting each group of 8 as a duality. The unit is surrounded in a circle by 3; the duality is surrounded in a square by 4: 3 employs the whole; 4 employs division. Bringing everything together, this gives the numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, and after three eliminations everything is still brought together. There remain three excess units, which, repeated three times, give 9. The strands are therefore $4 \times 9 = 36$, a number constituting extreme positivity = 1. $36 = 3 + 6 = 9$; $9 + 1 = 10$.

If, on the other hand, there remain three dualities, this makes 6, and the number of strands will be $4 \times 6 = 24$, which constitutes extreme negativity – 4. $24 = 2 + 4 = 6$; $6 + 4 = 10$. Such is

the mystery of transformation; this is intended solely to demonstrate the formation of numbers.

The hexagrams contain 192 positive lines and the same number of negative lines. Now, 192 × 36 = 6,912, and 192 × 24 = 4,608, making a total of 11,520 divination formulas. Perform the four operations: division into two groups; suspension of one line; elimination by four; collection of the remainder. Three changes determine a formula; eighteen determine a hexagram.

The six lines being complete, considering some as movement and others as rest, it follows that a single hexagram can successively become any one of the sixty-four lines, and serve to determine omens. These modifications are presented therefore in 4,096 different kinds:
$4{,}096 = 64^2$.

All these questions were supplemented and elaborated upon in the instructions of the Tcheouli, which are now lost, for the officials responsible for divination, but it is now absolutely impossible to verify this[1] .

## The Trials

*A.* Man asks; it is through the signs that he receives the answer; he receives, as if by an echo, the command that dictates his destiny. For him, there is nothing distant, nothing obscure, nothing hidden. He has knowledge and awareness of the beings that are coming.

*B.* After counting three by three for the modification, one counts again five by five: one seeks the numbers seven, eight, nine, ten, to determine the symbol of movement or rest. One must scrutinise the analogies and differences in the words, in order to discern the distinctions between the members of the associations; then comes the test by threes and fives, in order to compare the beings and the words. (These two texts are taken from the works of Weifeï.)

## The Signs

*A.* The Yi contains the ultimate origin; this is what gives rise to the two lines: the two give rise to the four symbols, which give rise to the eight trigrams. The order is thus always clearly laid out when it comes to divination.

*B.* The instruments of divination are blades of grass and the tortoise shell; through them, auspicious or inauspicious omens of the universe are determined. The heavens reveal the symbols, and the sage deduces the omens from them. From the river emerges the diagram, from the lake emerges the book, and the sage formulates the rules. The formulas associated with the symbols serve to determine the warning.

*C.* Favourable or unfavourable omens are always the result of the destiny charted by the formulas: it is through the movement of changes that these omens

[1] Paragraphs A, C and E are translated from the determinative formulas of Wenwang and Chou Kong; paragraph B, from the commentary by Tseng-ts'e; paragraphs D and F, from the work by Tsu-hi, entitled: *The Dispelling of Darkness*.

become evident. Fohi saw the symbols in the heavens, and the formulas on the earth. Two eyes exchanging glances, beings come into existence.

*D.* Fohi made knots in rope for hunting and fishing. He derived this from the trigram Li. Shennong bent wood to make a plough; he derived this from the trigram Yi. He established the market so that men from all over the universe might trade there; he derived this from the trigram She ho.

Hoan ghi, Yao and Shouen shi ruled; they guided the people so that they would not be idle; they enlightened them so that the people might follow the path of virtue; they derived this from the two trigrams of Perfection. They split a tree to make a canoe, they cut wood to make an oar; and they took this from the trigram Hoan. They harnessed the oxen for transport; they mounted the horses; and they took this from the trigram Soueï. They reinforced the doors to receive dangerous guests; and they took this from the trigram Yu. They took a tree to make a pestle, and dug the earth to make a mortar; and they took this from the trigram Siae Kio. They bent and carved the wood to make a bow and arrows; and they took this from the trigram Kuei. They erected pillars and shaped the forms to build dwellings; and they took this from the trigram Tatsheng. They made use of inner and outer coffins; and they took this from the trigram Tae kouo. They invented written characters and tablets; and they took this from the trigram Koue[2] .

## The Concordances

In ancient times, the sage secretly perceived the mysterious causes of light, and he created divination. He tripled the heavens, doubled the earth, and relied on numbers; he exhausted the reason for existence, and fully embraced the nature of man, in order to attain destiny. Heaven and earth determine situations; the mountain and the marsh freely mingle their vapours; lightning and wind come into contact, water and fire do not destroy one another. To know what has passed is in accordance with the ordinary way; to know what will come is above the ordinary way.

Lightning shakes; the wind scatters; rain soaks; the sun evaporates; the obstacle halts; satisfaction delights; heaven governs; passivity embraces.

The Supreme Being arises from movement; it is equal in the universe; it is seen in transformation; it acts in passivity; it speaks in contentment; it fights in activity; it strives in movement: it completes the word in the final standstill[3] .

Movement, which is the Dragon, is the mysterious source of all beings.

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[2] Paragraphs B and D are translated from the formulas of Wenwang and Tsheou Kong; paragraph A, from the Kimong by Tsouhi; and paragraph C, from the commentary by the same author.

[3] These correspondences require a graphical explanation of the eight primary trigrams: three solid lines ☰ Khièn__ sky; a solid line between two broken lines ☵ Khan ☲ water; a broken line above two solid lines touei marais; a broken line below two solid lines ☳ souen ☴ wind; a broken line between two solid lines___ li___ fire; a solid line above two broken lines ☶ ken ☶ mountain; a solid line below two broken lines___ tshen___ lightning; three broken lines ☷ Khouen ☷ earth. ☶ ☶

Khièn, activity; Khouen, passivity; tshen, movement; souen, entry; khan, fall; lî, vibration; ken, halt; toueï, satisfaction.

Khièn, horse; khouen, mare; thsen, dragon; souen, hen; khan, pig; lî, pheasant; ken, fox; touei, ram. Examples are taken from the body: Khièn, head; khouen, belly; tshen, feet; souen, thigh; khan, ear; lî, eye; ken, hand; touei, mouth. Examples are taken from the body. Khièn, the sky is the father; khouen, the earth is the mother; tshen, the male principle; souen, the female principle; khan, the husband; lî, the wife; ken, the young boy; touei, the young girl.

Khièn: this is the sun, that which is round, the precious stone, the prince, gold, the cold, ice, the colour red, the swift horse, the white horse, the dry tree, that which is straight, clothing, speech.

Khouen: earth, cloth, the axe, economy, equality, the mother of the ox, the chariot, appearance, the crowd, the handle of a tool, black, that which is square, darkness, the bag, the pipe, the fly.

Tshen: this is the dragon, lightning, yellow, causative influence, the great road, the eldest son, haste, bamboo, harmonious song, the mane, return to life, repetition, the raven.

Souen: this is wood, the wind, the eldest daughter, the weft, white, work, length, elevation, the branch, the sense of smell, the broad forehead, profit, the tree, the quest.

Khan: this is water, the hidden secret, the roof, the bowstring, unease, the circulation of blood, pale red, ardour, the slender foot, the cover, calamity, the moon, the thief, hardness of heart, the den, music, the thorn bush, the fox.

Li: this is fire, the sun, lightning, the young girl, posterity, the weapon, the tortoise, the belly, the reptile, the fruit, the stem, the cow.

Ken: this is the mountain, the path, the stone, the door, the priest, the finger, the mouse, solidity, the nose, the tiger, the wolf.

Toueï: this is the marsh, the child, the soothsayer, the tongue, the rupture, hardness, the concubine, the ram, permanence[4].

NOTE. – Reference may be made to the preceding texts:

1°) that divination was, in fact, established by Wenwang and Tsheoukong.

2°) that the rules of divination lie in the science of numbers and that counting was done using strands of the shi grass.

3°) that the manipulation of strands of the shi grass led to the examination of any one of the sixty-four hexagrams.

4°) that this examination was to be carried out by taking one of the hexagram positions as a guiding principle, in accordance with the wording of the question, and that there were thus 64 ways of examining the hexagram indicated by the manipulation; consequently, there were $(64)^2$ or 4096 ways of answering a question posed.

5°) finally, that, depending on the question asked, the meaning of each of the trigrams making up the hexagrams was indicated in the concordances.

One may, by analogy, find other things in the preceding texts. But the state of the tradition, from a purely divinatory point of view, does not allow us to ascertain whether what can be found in these texts is truly what those who wrote them intended us to find there.

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[4] This entire text is taken from Chapter VI of Khongtzeu's (Confucius) 'Ten Wings'.

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